Gun-Ota

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Prologue

Year 20XX, Winter, On A Certain Day in February.
I, Hotta Youta, am twenty-seven years old this year. I live alone where my age equals my time without a girlfriend. Also a virgin, high school dropout and a former-hikikomori.
Currently working at metalworking factory, in Tokyo's metropolitan Oota district.
"It was a cold day like this, when Tanaka passed away…."
Having finished work, it was a boring walk home, while, regretfully recalling painful memories.
I became a hikikomori in my high school days— even though I call it hell, I am by no means exaggerating it.
My only back-up plan was taking the entrance exam, in case I failed the enrollment for other private high schools, but I failed to pass the examination for even low level private high school. At that time, my friend, Tanaka Kouji and I, were bullied by three DQN(delinquent) in the same class.

I think because we were targeted we both became thin and weak-willed.
Then getting beaten up was a common occurrence.
Extortion, burning my skin with cigarette buds, masturbating in front of the delinquents, licking and drinking out of a urinal— they never stopped.
I was scared of getting to know my classmates so I kept thinking that they were of no concern to me.
The homeroom teacher, wanting to avoid the situation, pretended not to see most of the fights.
Without the courage to oppose them, we just continued to take the bullying silently.
I was released from their bullying only when we got to second year.
The reason is that our classes changed.
It turned out only I was separated from them while Tanaka and the delinquents were in the same classroom.
Since they'd need to go out of their way to cross over to my classroom, they didn't bother bullying me. The outcome was, the brunt of it was concentrated on Tanaka. Yet, I didn't even think of helping him.
I just breathed a sigh of relief having been released from being bullied.
As I expected, I'll only be saved if he's sacrificed.
An incident occurred before second year's winter break.

As a former bullied child, I chose to distance myself from the surroundings; always eating lunch alone.
Rather than eat in the toilet in winter, the back of the school building is less popular. Therefore, in those cold days, I always ate lunch outside.
Tanaka and the delinquents had gathered there.
He was naked in seiza position on the ground while shivering and fully soaked with water.
Besides being left with a water bucket, he apparently had dry leaves clinging to his body.
The delinquent group seemed to be having fun as they laughed and took pictures with their smartphone.
Tanaka recognizing me, faced me with a gaze seeking for help.
The three of them also turned around after noticing me.
“What are you looking at? Skinny midget.”
“What’s with that expression? Huh!?”
I became frightened by their voice and ran away at full speed
Tanaka’s face went paled in despair after I abandoned him. Even now, I vividly remember it.
I definitely won’t forget this for my entire life.
That very same night, Tanaka committed suicide by hanging himself by the slide at the playground.
In his suicide note he accused about the bullying done by those 3.
The school dealt with the problem by immediately and indefinitely suspending those the trio.
By immediately suspending them, the school had intended to conclude the incident before the situation had become worse.
After the school disposed of them according to their plan, it had become a discussion about the perpetrators’ companions.
A settlement to the discussion was met in one month.
The perpetrators had to pay fine which was a lot of money to the victim’s parents when they settled.
Tanaka’s suicide ended up in a small column written on a local newspaper.
Since that year, I had stayed inside my home.
I felt responsible for Tanaka’s suicide — furthermore, now that he passed away, I became the target of the delinquent’s bullying while sitting around.
And because of my fear of being bullied, I became unable to leave from my room at my home.
I’m a pessimistic, despicable coward. However, I was unable to leave my room at those days.
Eventually, I dropped out of high school.
Since then, I’d always stayed inside my room engrossed in gaming, manga, anime, model guns, and modern weapon system and the like.

I admired modern weapon system especially the model guns. Then, using a real handgun to shoot those three delinquents to death. I really want to have a dream where I board a tank and chase them and stuff.
When I approached the age of twenty, my father's connections in Tokyo's Oota district will get me a job in a metalwork factory, or I'll get a million yen and leave my family.
1,000,000 is a lot. But, at best, I don't think I'll have that in only a year.
I can't have that option. —
However, it was good regardless of the outcome. Even though I'm sometimes confine myself indoors, aside from taking the responsibility for my younger siblings, I had no future prospects.
The teacher gave me his seal of approval by saying "Certainly eligible for Tokyo University!" to my typical parents, as long as I dont' become baggage no matter what to my 4 superior and younger siblings, it'll be fine.
In reality, after moving to Tokyo University, because this was my first time living alone, I never had gotten into a contact with anyone.
The typical me that had been cast away by my parents was carefree and happy.
Above all, because I was separated from that mountain town, I will never again meet those delinquent trio.
The metal-working factory of my father and the others was strict but it wasn't filled with unreasonable violence. I was even instructed carefully in the job.
Compared to my hellish life in the last year of high school, the difference is heaven and earth.
Originally, I was confident in my skillful and dextrous fingers. Again and again, since I strived to meet expectations, I had to acquire a lot of skills.
If you were to compare me to those who are called craftsman, I may not even hold a foot…
Thus I immersed myself in my job to forget those hellish high-school days for approximately 7 years — but, every time it became cold in winter, I remember Tanaka.
If I had been a little brave or something, it might had not ended up in suicide, wouldn't it…?
At the usual convenience store, I bought my evening bento and tea.
"…Now, even though I'm a good person, I still haven't recovered."
While sighing from melancholy, I walked toward the residential area.
There remained 10 meters until I reached my home but I noticed on the way, a suspicious man standing.
So that I could avoid the detestable light from the street lights, I had leaned on the concrete wall.
Because of the moonlight, I was dimly able to make out his figure.

He wore a hooded jacket, and jeans under him. Doesn't he feel cold? That's not the sort of coat you should wear. Because he was looking down I wasn't able to see his face. I was able to judge him as having a height of 180 centimeters, and a plain physique.
If I start retracing my steps for main road and pretend not to see him after such a long time, on the contrary, he'll likely give me strange vibes.
It did not look like he wanted to fight since he was glancing down, so I'll take as much distance as possible while I try to pass him.
" Hey, wait sec…."
"!?"
After he called me, I involuntarily stood still.
The man began heading straight to me.
As the street light shone on that guy's face, I was able to check his face.
My goggling eyes did not meet his gaze, he had a bad skin complexion, a unshaven face, gaping nose pierce, and from the nape of the neck there hung a tattoo.
Surprisingly, he had changed completely, I understood immediately. It was one of the 3 delinquents that had bullied me, it was their leader. I'm sure his name was…. Souma Ryouichi
"Ain't It cuz a you that ma lifes in da dumps! Aaaah! Fuck!!! Why me!!"
"Ah, uh, ah……."
The time came for him to get back at me, I feel nauseous because he reeked of something like garbage. If I remember correctly, I read that there's a legal drug on the internet that if you intake it, you smell like this.
The other party is in an unstable state. But right now, I'll just turn around pretend not to notice, and run away when possible.
However a flashback of my hellish past made my legs tremble, and kept me from moving.
"Tanaka-kuun! Hotta-kuun! Ya look like trash! You know he died silently, right!? Damn it!"
He took out something like a cheap kitchen knife, he'd have bought with a hundred yen, from his hoodie's pocket.
"Uwaaaaaaaa!"
My fear reached its apex as I screamed miserably, I threw the convienience store bag I was holding, turned around and ran with everything I had.
The thought of bravely fighting and subduing him didn't come to my mind even once.
But, I could do nothing but scream and run.
Run, run, run, run, run— charging to the park.
Even after that, he eventually caught up and shoved me from behind.
I ran with as much vigor as I had but fell face first into the sandbox.

As soon as he mounted me, without any hesitation, with both hands he swung down the kitchen knife.
“Gugaa…a” *choking*
I felt the blood erupted on my pierced chest.
From pain, the previous stimulating sensation became hot.
“Die! Damn it! Damn it! Damn iiiiiiiiiiitt!!!”
He continued, and continued, and continued stabbing me with the kitchen knife, forcefully breaking my ribs while letting out a cry.
I could tell that my consciousness was quickly receding to it’s border a number of times.
I heard a woman’s scream in the distance as if I was underwater.
My eyelids were as heavy as lead and had the feeling of falling down into an abyss.
The last scene I saw was me bathing in my own pool of blood, and his face looking like a mad man.
My consciousness stopped like a frozen TV screen.

Chapter 001 – Reincarnated in a Different World

Slowly appearing from the water's surface, Hotta Youta had regained consciousness and opened his eyes.

…Is this the hospital?

My last memory was burned into my memory; being bullied for being a loner and getting stabbed repeatedly with a kitchen knife– something like that.
I was brought to a hospital, luckily, I expected I'd lose my life. But no matter how hard I tried I didn't feel anything.
I was put to sleep on top a soft bed with pure white sheets and for some reason the one sleeping next to me was an infant.

Sleeping together with a baby, for the wounds to quickly recover or something like that. Is this the latest medical treatment practice at this hospital?

For argument's sake, assuming I concede 100 steps, no… 10000 steps, for such a treatment to exist.
Hmm? Does the baby sleeping next to me have dog ears?

To start with, I doubt there is an artificial product such as this. The silver ears that were twitching brought themselves to my attention. They were the real deal before my very eyes.
Perhaps a mutation that deforms the human body? And possibly from child birth?
After pondering about that matter, a woman came to glance at me.

"—, —, —-."

She did not speak Japanese, nor did she talk in a language I was familiar with.
However, not only was her language noticeable, but also her figure.

About in her early 20s. In addition to being a tall woman, she also had noticeably big breasts.
She was a beautiful girl with slightly droopy eyes. But thanks to that, she had a gentle expression that could make everyone looking at her relieved.

Above all, I had noticed that the color of her hair was pink and ears that sprung up similar to rabbits above her head.
She was smiling delightfully while her rabbit ears fluttered about.
There is no way they could have produced such product, was my initial reaction.
She extended her arms and carried me.

This has to be a lie! As a typical adult, I may have a small frame. But for a female to easily carry me, there is no way it can be that easy!?

Not only she was carrying me so easily, but also swayed me in order to lull me into a sleep.
『The rabbit-eared person is inhuman so she might not consider carrying me as a big deal』
I had also suspected that, and soon found out the real truth.

Wh, What, Heeeeey!

The shape of the rabbit eared woman, that had carried me by herself, was reflected lightly by the window glass — There a black haired infant the woman was carrying was also reflected.

"Waaaa, waaa!"

Moving my mouth, I tried to speak.
The one being reflected there was unmistakably me.

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For the sake of calming myself down, how many days here had passed?.
So many astonishing events came one after another.
Calm down, stay cool… First of all, let me confirm the situation one at a time.

I woke up after being stabbed by that former bully, and I became an infant.
I was laid to sleep in a large wooden bed together with another infant.
The sleeping baby with silver hair next to me had dog-like ears comparable to the animal characters that appear in anime and manga.
Even the ears of the woman who often came to see the situation in the room was not human. She had rabbit ears.
Except animal people don't really exist. Besides, her body looks like a foreigner. While I was thinking, a fat oba-chan entered and changed our diapers and fed us milk.
The oba-chans were talking to each other but it wasn't in English, Russian, or Chinese.

"——, —."
"–, –."

The rabbit-eared woman had entered the room, and she began a conversation in a friendly manner with the oba-chans. She lifted up the dog-eared baby next to me.
She put her hand on the baby's head.
That hand gave out a faint light.

"–! –, —"

She smiled broadly after she spoke.
Next was my turn.
She lifted me up the same way, before placing her hand on my head.

"—-…."

She looked at me with sympathy.
Without understanding the reason, I was embarrassed.

"–, —-."
"—-! —-."

The rabbit-eared woman and the oba-chans were talking when they left the room.
Anyway, for the sake of grasping the situation I ended up in, it was necessary to learn the language those women were using.
So, I diligently listen to their words.

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Since regaining my consciousness, 1 year had passed.
I could not write or read their alphabet, but I could understand what those women were talking about.
Thanks to becoming a baby again, my brains became like a soft sponge.
Like a thirsty sponge absorbing water, I memorised what I heard.
From the words of those women, I started piecing together my current situation — my current location is within an orphanage at a small town called Hod, in the Aljio territory.
The total population of the town is less than 1000.
It really is a small town.

Aljio territory, Hod — I haven't heard of either place before.
I think I was transported to a foreign country, but…
No matter how far this place is, people putting on rabbit ears and dog ears definitely don't exist.

Somehow or another, during that stabbing event, it looked like I was killed, apparently.
Being reborn in a different world while still possessing my previous memories — that was my conclusion.
Otherwise, I won't be able to explain the current situation.

The rabbit-eared woman's name appears to be『El』. She is also the founder of this orphanage.
The oba-chans called her『El-sensei』. They also liked her.
In this parallel world, it doesn't look like it's a custom to discriminate just because you have rabbit ears, it seems.

From these women's unified conversation; about 2 years ago, soon after being born I was abandoned in a basket in front of this orphanage.
On the exact same day, I was put to sleep next to a dog-eared baby. It looked like that baby was also abandoned.

2 years ago, huh… Now I'm 2 years old…

On a silk handkerchief in the basket,『Lute』had been embroidered.
It looks like『Lute』is my name.

I was struck by a feeling close to resignation.
I had looked away from my acquaintance when he was being bullied; I gave him up as a scapegoat for the sake of saving myself.
What I did also took part in driving Tanaka into suicide.
I had been surrounded by that sin. To be killed by the main perpetrator of that bullying, to be born again and then to be abandoned by my parents becoming an orphan.

The very meaning of retribution.

…For this reason, I was determined.

I will become strong in this world with this life. I will have the courage not to flee away from disasters. And if a person needs help, I will absolutely help them out. I will do acts of mercy so that I, who abandoned Tanaka and was killed for it, can atone for those actions…

Thus I, formerly named Hotta Youta — now Lute, decided to live my life this way.

Chapter 002 - Magical Liquid Metal

I, Hotta Youta, in this parallel world, had become a 3 year old『Lute』.

Also, I finally learned how to walk and talk.
I wanted to go outside the town to look around but the orphanage rules prohibited me.
That would only be allowed once I turned 7.

On the other hand, walking around the orphanage was possible.
Every morning, it was decided that I would receive lessons from El-sensei in one of the large rooms at the orphanage.
El-sensei gathered the orphanage and town's children and taught them reading and writing, arithmetic, this world's history, and common etiquette.
So that's why the oba-chans adoringly refer to her as teacher.

Math aside, living in this world required you to learn reading and writing, and, of course, general knowledge.

The children taking the class were of an age around first year primary school students.
Since I was quiet, I was the only 3 year old child sitting in the back where I was not punished to stand in hallway.

Math — I had no problems with the basic four operations.
My outward age is 3. But inside, I'll be 30 this year.
By the time I became a hikikimori, I had already mastered those four basic mathematical operations.

I was able to memorize without any difficulty the alphabet they used in reading and writing. Maybe it was because I was in growing up phase, or was reincarnated, or the combination of those two.

From the history lesson, I received details on how this parallel world came to be.
Because the entire lesson took a day to end, the rest became summarized.

Approximately 100,000 years ago — a god, named Tenjin-sama, created both the celestial world and the surface world, and governed in peace.
But one day, 6 Dai Maou stole the secret art from Tenjin-sama which was referred to as manipulating belief or Shinpou.
The Dai Maous were able to manipulate Shinpou and degrade it into magic.
Soon after, they escaped to the surface world.
And then, the 6 Dai Maou conquered the surface world using the power of magic.
However in the 5 large continents where the 5 races live, heroes had risen; the secret art for magic was taken back from the Dai Maous. And the magic had been restructured in order to deal with them.
And because of the emergence of those magical heroes, five of the Dai Maous were defeated and sealed.
But the last of the Dai Maous had allegedly gone into hiding while holding his breath at the Demon Continent.
However, thanks to the heroes from the five races, peace had finally arrived in the surface world.

That was the summary of this world's history.

100,000 years… The history of the previous world's humanity began about 7 million years ago. Even so, if you were to compare them, isn't there a large time difference…?

The 5 races that the heroes came from are from the different races in this world. They're from Human, Fay, Beast, Dragon and Demon.

The Human race looked similar to me. In this world, they were the most populous.
The Fay race were referred to elves, dwarfs, fairies and other such creatures.
The Beast race had non-human ears similar to El-sensei. They also had noticeable beastly characteristics. On the other hand, the Dragon race resembled the appearance of a human but had a dragon horn on their head. Among the 5 races, they had the most pride in their clan.
And lastly, the Demon race. Those who can't be classified from other four races were usually classified from this race.

Those heroes are now popularly called『Heroes of the Five Races』. They are often used in epic stories and fairy tales.

Next is general knowledge.
We learned in history that Magic was taken back from the Dai Maous. But in order for me to deal with the inhabitants in this world, I'll become someone who manipulates magic.

People that could handle magic in this world are called 『Magicians』.

Because of the history on how the Dai Maous were defeated and sealed, the social status of Magicians are quite high.
Naturally, Magicians also exist in all sorts of ranks.
If the rank is high, then their influence also increases.

These are the rankings:

SSS rank

SS+ rank
SS rank
SS- rank
S+ rank
S rank
S- rank
A+ rank
A rank
A- rank
B+ rank
B rank
B- rank
C+ rank
C rank
C- rank

B+ rank is the limit most common people can reach.
A rank is only reached by a handful of people called『Prodigies』.
The existences that reach S rank are referred to as『Inhuman』『Fiend』

『Freak』.
The existences that reach SS class are referred to as being in Maou class.
Reaching the God's domain, the SSS rank, is referred to as『Shinpou』or God's Technique.

Fundamentally, children referred to as『Talented Magicians』were those that held B- rank magic and above.
Their latent magical capacity could be sensed from the outside.

An individual's effort and affinity depends on their dedication to spiritual improvement. However, there is no alternative for those holding B rank magical capacity; even those that moved to A-rank and S rank were seemingly like that.
However, for those holding C+ rank magical power, they won't reach B-rank even if they're not capable. That's why it was still necessary to practice magic in order to go beyond the standard.

If one became a rank higher than B-, they're basically winners; they can choose whichever job they want especially those high-paying ones.

「From the time they are born, winners are already separated from losers….」

Furthermore, people that are judged as losers do not become more than B-rank as written in history.

In this harsh world, juniors surpassing seniors is basically impossible.

For that reason, royals, aristocrats, and old lineages, disliked the tendency of having to marry with the exception of magicians.

High-class magicians marry for the sake of increasing the probability of giving birth to more talented children. These is the reason why the magical capacity of the old lineages, nobles and the like are fundamentally high.

You can roughly divide magics into four separate categories.
1: Attribute Magic
2: Void Magic

3: Healing Magic
4: Support Magic

Attribute magic is, quite literally, manipulating a source of an attribute like changing it into fire.
Void magic is offensive magic without attribute magic. It is identified as manipulating magic itself.
Healing magic is magic that cures injuries mainly by operating within the body. In certain games it's called white magic.
Support magic is defense, movement buffs and so on. With the exception of offensive magic, it is everything else lumped together.

By the way, El-sensei's magician's rank is B+ rank.
However, her specialty is healing magic.

I approached El-sensei to ask about something after the classes were over.

「El-sensei, can I… ask you something?」
「When there was something you did not understand during class, you immediately would come to ask. Although you are still small, you sure are a hard worker, aren't you, Lute?」

While giving me a smile that made me warm and fuzzy inside, she gently stroked my head.

「It's not something I don't understand in the lessons. But… I want to confirm whether I have talent to be a magician.」
「Ah….」

Her hand suddenly stopped stroking me.
The question was like『Where do babies come from?』when asking your parents; such awkward atmosphere.

Ehh? Did she hear it right?
「That… errr… right… Lute… you don't have talent to be a magician….」

El-sensei, after hesitating, answered resolutely.

「I already confirmed it when Lute was a baby. There's no doubt about it.」
When I was… a baby? Hmm… Ah, I see! That time when you carried me and placed your hand on my head, you had a seemingly sad expression… So that was the reason!

The face I showed her after understanding what she said, she misunderstood it as shock.
El-sensei gave me a lap pillow, as she matched my gaze and tried to make me understand by talking in a serious tone of voice.

「Even if you don't have any talent as a magician, don't be sad… Becoming a magician isn't the only important thing in this world….」
「Sensei has already seen many people and watched over many children in the orphanage. Like you, Lute, even though they were not talented as magicians, they have become successful traders, craftsmen, and things like that. Those kids still discovered happiness despite not becoming magicians. Although you were not blessed with talent, don't be disheartened and lose your way. Those that failed to come to terms with reality ended up with miserable lives…. 」
「Lute… I know you are a good child, that is why… You have to plan your life in a way that properly matches your ability, understood?」

『Because you were not blessed with talent, come to terms with reality, set up a plan for your life that matches your ability』 to a 3 year old baby, is that the normal thing to say?

No, guys who act reckless will ruin their body even though they know they don't have the talent.

「Umm… Sensei, For the sake of my curiosity… What rank is my magical capacity?」
「Ah, that's right… About C rank」

C rank, isn't that the second position from the bottom?
El-Sensei, without restraint, told me resolutely.
『It would be good if you gave up on trying to be a magician』 I think that was what she meant.
I acted innocently as I responded to her.

「I guess, I don't have any talent… Sensei says so… I think I will walk a path that isn't one.」
「That's a good boy! Well then, because Sensei still has lots of things to do, I'll be going now.」
「Sensei, thank you for answering my question.」

El-sensei stood up, stroked my head and left the room.

I have no talent as a magician… Normally, in such reincarnations stories, the main character has talent, training their magical power from the time they were a child and receiving a enormous magical capacity and other benefits. Isn't that the way it's supposed to be?

In my previous life, I had been killed by the main perpetrator of my bullying. I had been reborn and then abandoned by my parents. Furthermore I was also told that I had no talent. Surely, it's "an arrow to the knee".

For the sake of helping others and also for my own protection, I need to get stronger, after all, not becoming a magician in this world is… severe. Also, I'll become something a bit more grand and do fencing and Kenpou and things like that. But, where will I find someone to teach me?

It can't be helped. Those without talent will always be jealous and envious. I resolve myself for an alternative plan.
However, in class the next day, a ray of hope appeared.

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In General Knowledge class, lessons concerning magical devices were taught.

An ordinary person can't possess magical power… But there is a way to utilize magic.

And that is by using『Magical Devices』.
Magical Devices are identified as, all devices endowed with magical energy.

A sword with magic energy inside becomes sharper, armor acquires resistance to things like fire, footwear will make you swift like the wind, et cetera — magical devices are very diverse.
Naturally, magical devices are more expensive than ordinary weapons.

Like that, in the explanation of the magical devices, there was a truly interesting subject.
『Magical Liquid Metal』
An item obtained by killing a monster called metal slime.

Magical Liquid Metal is a special metal having a unique characteristics; distributing magical power while coming into contact with it and having a mental image of the weapon will transform it to that very shape.

The advantage of this is that if it's in small quantities, it's easy to carry.
For that reason, it's used as a magical tool of choice for assassins.

The disadvantage is that once it's fixed into a shape it will never again return back to magical liquid metal
It's said that unless you picture the image clearly; if you make a sword, it will be blunt; if you make an armor, it will not only be uneven, but also the size would not match.
Restricted to use, cumbersome, and expensive.
An item that is also referred to as a classic example of an unpopular commodity.

Suddenly, a Newtype sound – ran through my mind.
A gun using magical liquid metal — it is possible to make a handgun, right?

This world's metallurgy technology is not that great, but if it's something close to an arquebuses, they might be able to craft it.
However, those guns could only shoot one shot per round while using『Muzzle-loading Style』.
When the day I fight this world's magician comes, I'll be using modern arms — even if they are small like revolvers, it will still be necessary.

『If I manufacture parts using this magical liquid metal, shouldn't I create handguns with a modern design?』 I thought in such a way.

It's worth a try.

I immediately wanted to buy and make some to test it but I don't have money.
I don't even have the advantage of studying magic. Whether『Flowing Magic Power』is literally or not, I don't even know.

It's not particularly necessary to become a magician, right? But it was necessary to study general knowledge about magic.

I, from this day onward, was branded as a『Magician without talent』.
However, I was determined to study magic.

Chapter 003 – Magical Training Revisited

Lute, 3-years old.

Walking, hearing conversations, and reaching the point of understanding them. The circumstances of this orphanage he was also able to understand a great deal about it.
El-sensei, a rabbit from the beast tribe, opened this orphanage for personal reasons.
For what reasons she opened this orphanage, I did not understand.

As of now, there are 18 children including myself living in this orphanage. Every year, the amount of children increases at a pace of 2-4.

In a war that broke out before I was born, it seemed that the pace would increase by many, occasionally by up to 10 people in a year.

If that were the case, then one would assume the orphanage would also lack food to eat for each day, and the children would have depressed expressions. The economic conditions were bad, but by no means were the children needy.
The reason was that El-sensei was an excellent magician, so they didn't have to go hungry.

For the sake of this small town without a doctor.
El-sensei acted as a substitute, and with the use of magic cured the townspeople.

And also gathered the town's children and taught them reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and common etiquette from the home school she opened.
Furthermore, she also instructed children with talent as magicians on the basics.

She amassed so many favorable relationships that the townspeople, out of gratitude, would contribute to the orphanage, and often women would take

the initiative to help out in the orphanage as volunteers.
Thanks to her contributions the children ate without worry.

With that said, it doesn't mean the children did nothing.
4 year olds, looked after the younger children, 5~6 year olds during the day, studied the alphabet, reading, arithmetic, history, and general education.
And after finishing, with the exception of sweeping, laundry——-cooking, were in charge of the chores.
When they turn 7 years old, they would receive simple jobs from the townspeople.
Weeding the fields, gathering the harvest, transporting the wheat, handling the poultry, sweeping the shops, etcetera.
A portion of that went to the orphanage.

Those that raised money, when they were 7 years old, left the orphanage.
They became merchant's apprentices, craftsman disciples, maids-in training for the wealthy, etc.
Leaving the orphanage by the time you were 10, and getting a job became an unspoken rule.

I was immediately judged as [Having no talent in Magic]. But, I'm not particularly pessimistic.
[Despite having trouble in this parallel world, and not having the chance to fire off flashy magic due to bad luck.] just that much is fine.

Besides, If I use the magical tool, magical liquid metal it's likely that I can manufacture guns in this world ——— handguns. So, I plan to study magic to the extent that I am able to produce handguns with the magical liquid metal.

Just like when I was practicing the alphabet among other things in class; I had also started openly attending lessons on the basics of magic.

Naturally, I could start attending class at the age of 7.
Typically, even if you were to practice at an age less than that, the body wouldn't be ready yet, so it will inevitably be a burden—- I had those thoughts.

Character writing class was in the morning.
From midday to afternoon the basic magician class is held in the orphanage's back yard.

In the afternoon, I watched as the lesson moved toward a corner of the backyard.
El-sensei had an expression that seemed to say she wanted to run away, she had the same expression in the character writing and other classes, though it is easy to overlook since she doesn't make a fuss and is quiet about it.

In front of El-sensei, students studying the basics of magic are lined up.
There is one child from the orphanage, and two from the town —- three in total.

The orphanage's older generation left, to officially be taught magic at a higher-level magic school, those in the class who have talent are rare and few in number.

Under El-sensei's instructions, first is warm-up exercises.
Running around the building.
Muscle training.
And after a break, we train in hand-to-hand martial arts.

The martial arts in this world focuses on strikes and throws.
The martial art being taught is similar to wrestling and kickboxing.

After another break, fencing is next.
Holding a wooden sword, only doing practice swings.
After a while a fellow pupil partnered with El-sensei and did*randori*.

According to Sensei, those who have talent as a magician are also first rate fencers and martial artists.
Even though there seems to be the possibility of being defeated by a magician without using magic but with their sword or fist, I still didn't give up and earnestly did this training.
Seems like the magician is unexpectedly physical.

Again, another break.
After that, there was even more magic training.

First of all,assistance magic (body reinforcement technique).
Magic that raises the hidden physical power of the body with magical power.

The body reinforcement ended, next was defending against enemy attack magic only through the use of defense processes————– the practice of making a defensive stance.

These two are required techniques for magicians.
Defensive stances are especially dangerous because it is based on instinct, if it can't be deployed in an instant it'll be useless in combat.
The other pupils are also suffering for the sake of learning defense magic, everyone's practicing with all they have.

Lastly, more attack magic.
I intently inspected them from inside,under sensei's guidance the pupils started the beginner attack magic practice.

[Burn in my hand weapon of fire! (Flame Lance!)]

In accordance to sensei's yell, a one metre flame spear was made from thin air.
It was still a long way to go, not just in number, but manifestation delay, speed, and power.
Everyone practiced attacks to the limits of their magical power.

Furthermore, next year we will begin practicing chantless magic.

The way to do it is—if you clearly imagine the attack, shape, and power; use about twice the magical power than usual; and point your emotions at the enemy, the magic will be invoked.

If you compare it to normal magic, chantless magic comes out slower, has less power, and has larger magic power consumption.
It is a skill that is full of demerits. However, there are a lot of situations where you can't use normal magic, where you can't use your voice.
In those situations, whether or not you can use chantless magic means the difference between life and death.
That is why this is a required subject.

These are the particulars of a magician's basic training.
By listening to the lectures from a corner of the backyard and looking at their way of doing it, I got the general gist of it.
A young priest reading unlearned scriptures before the gates—isn't it?

While in class, I immediately started practice by myself.
First is defense formations.

(According to El-sensei, "Imagine a wall made with magic. Put in the feeling of rejecting and resisting the enemy's attack, that way you can successfully make it", is it?)

In other words, an AT ○ield, right? Got it.

"*inhale*, *exhale*, *inhale*, *exhale*"

Breathing repeatedly, I closed my eyes.
Concentrating my mind, I recalled the movie Evan○○lion, and strengthened the image.
I opened my eyes, and shouted!

"AT ○ield, open!"

A lightly shining diamond-shaped defense formation appeared before my eyes.

"Ooh! Yahoo! I did i~~t!"

I felt a lethargy like having my soul pulled out by a death god.
The latter part of my shouts of joy became slow, cracked, and disappeared.
Like the time I was killed by the chief bully, my consciousness fell down a dark, bottomless hole.

The next time I opened my eyes, I was laid down on a futon in the nursery.
According to my silver-haired female childhood friend Snow, I learned to make a defense formation by watching.
But not knowing moderation, I used up all the magic inside my body, pooped my pants, and fainted with my eyes turned white.
El-sensei who had noticed the accident interrupted her lesson and came

running in confusion.
It seems a volunteer auntie washed my soiled ass and underwear, then changed my clothes and laid me down on a futon.
The childhood friend also got angry at me.

“That is a no-no! Lute-kun is making trouble for Sensei!”
“Sorry, sorry. I’ll be careful next time”

I already thought up countermeasures.
I won’t make the same mistake twice.

I was called over by El-sensei who had noticed me waking up, and was gently scolded.

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Failure, failure☆!
On the inside I am an adult, but since the outside is a child I was forgiven right!

Even though I got scolded, I participated in magician’s basic class without punishment.
El-sensei and the students made a difficult face but the other party is a three-year old.

Of course, I don’t intent to join class without any countermeasures.
Based on last time’s failure, I already emptied the contents of my bowels at the toilet.
Even if I run out of magic power, this time nothing will leak out.
Perfect.
With a resolute expression, I once again joined special training.

I watched body strengthening arts practice.
Two townspeople joined in lessons with the first years.
They were having a light game while doing their body strengthening arts.
El-Sensei is in charge of the orphan who had just started joining lessons this year.

“Cover your body more uniformly with magic power. Being unbalanced only uses up your magic power, it’ll soon be used up”
“y, yes. I’ll do my best”

The beginner student responded to El-Sensei’s instruction with great effort.

Watching the conversation between the two, with El-Sensei’s advice as reference I tried doing body strengthening arts.

(umm…… “Cover my whole body evenly in magic power”, is it)

In other words, Hu○ter×Hu○ter’s Nen○Power right? Got it.

“Suu~, Haa~, Suu~, Haa~”

Cycling my breath, I closed my eyes.
Concentrating my mind, I recalled the part in the manga where the protagonist awakened Nen○Powers, and strengthened the image.
I opened my eyes, and shouted!

“Ha!”

Magic power like seething steam came pouring out of my body.
I tried jumping lightly, and easily flew twice my body height.

“Ooh! so this is the power of body strengthening arts! It really strengthens the body~~”

Once again a lethargy like having my soul being pulled out by a death god.
The latter part of my shouts of joy became slow, cracked, and disappeared.
Losing strength in my legs, I fell down face up just like that.

The next time I opened my eyes, I was laid down on a futon in the nursery.
According to my silver-haired female childhood friend Snow, I practiced the body strengthening arts I learned by watching.
But not knowing moderation, I used up all the magic power inside my body and fainted, fell on my back, hit my head on the rocks strewn around on the ground, bled spectacularly, became incontinent, puked, and having my throat blocked I collapsed from lack of oxygen.

El-sensei who had noticed the accident came running in confusion, and hadn't it been for her aid, I would have died.

I was called over by El-sensei who had noticed me waking up, and was scolded in a loud voice by Sensei who raised her rabbit ears.
This is the first time I've seen El-Sensei so angry.

Even though on the inside I am over 30 years old, I violently trembled in fear.
This is truly the fear of angering someone who's normally quiet, huh….

After the second disturbance, El-Sensei directly forbade me from Magician's basic practice.
As expected, being disturbed twice is unpleasant.
However, I'm allowed to join if it's reading or writing, since I could do it without disturbance…….

My magician lessons ran aground on a rock.

Chapter 004 – Reversi

Lute, 4 years old.

Johann Cruyff, former soccer representative of Netherland, said,『The foundation of it all is ball control. If I can't control the ball then I will run after the ball in another sport.』
So rather than using magic, I decided I will start to train to control my Maryoku.

But after becoming 4 years old, you needed to look after the younger children.
Conversely, it means I was permitted to do what I wanted after that.
There were three 2- to 3-year-old boys and girls we had to take care of.
And we four 4-year-olds had to take care of them daily.

We were expected to keep them company at the『Nursery』room where there were 2 to 4 year-old children sleeping.
But since all 3, except me, were girls, I let them involuntary take care of the children.
Thanks to that, I could devote myself to improve my control technique on my Maryoku.

I took up a corner of the nursery and recalled the content of El-sensei general lecture class.
El-sensei explained what『Maryoku』concretely was.

Maryoku is the energy that enters a person through soul as its vessel.
The amount of soul to maintain a body—and soul—hardly changes regardless of race.
Maryoku refers to the amount of energy which is contained in the soul except the part that is necessary to maintain the body and soul.

The amount of Maryoku also varies widely by race.

It may be as large as a lake, a basin, or as small as a cup of glass.
And if Maryoku is completely spent, the energy which maintains the body and soul will be insufficient and will cause fainting.

I will faint, since I will not be able to maintain the condition within my spirit and body once I spent all my Maryoku.

If that was the case, then I would start to grasp the total amount of Maryoku and measure how much of it could be used before reaching the limit.

I kept my eyes closed while I focus my consciousness inside.

In the center of my chest, I felt a warm clump faintly.
I imagined slowly pouring that warm light little by little to my right hand; the light moved from thecenter of my chest to my right hand.
There was neither sense of Maryoku consumption, nor fatigue, nor despondency in the body.

I tried to release the Maryoku that I collected in my right hand outside.

「Uoo….」

About half of the light was released.
The body became heavy like after a sleepless night.

Is this clump of light itself the useable amount of Maryoku?

My expectations were probably right—my intuition tells me so.

The next day.
In the『Nursery』room, the girls were looking after the younger children.

I sat at the side of the corner of the room and started my special control training again on my Maryoku.

I closed my eyes and clumsily felt the warm light inside the center of my chest.

I imagined channeling my Maryoku little by little to my right hand.
Yesterday, I didn't mind it because I only moved it to my right hand but the flow did not go straightforward.
The light was distorted like a straight line painted by a mouse.
The width of the lane was wavy and not uniform.

Is it possible to quickly send a stable amount to the point where I want it?

First, I needed to reach the point where I could freely adjust the width and straighten the flow myself.
If this became possible, then I could quickly send the necessary amount of Maryoku to the point where it was needed.
It would be fair to say that you needed to go that far if you wanted to control Maryoku without interference.

I'm fired up and rolled up my sleeves.
But the training was interrupted by the protests of the 3 girls.

「Lute-kun, you'll get scolded if you don't properly take care of the little kids with us!」

The young girl—called Snow—said that as the representative of the girls.

Her characteristics were: a shoulder-long silver hair, pure white skin, dog-ears and -tails. She was also from rare species called White Wolf tribe that was living on the Snowy Mountain of the North Continent.

She and I were childhood friends who get along very well. When we were babies, we were left behind in the orphanage at the same time.

Surprisingly in this world, there were almost no parents that leave a baby without notice behind.

In the orphanage, the children who came here are those whose parents died through illness, accident, war, etc.
It was because of Economic reasons that the other orphanage are full.

Because there were no relatives that they could rely upon, the two remaining girls in our group were brought over at the age of 3 when their parents died of illness and accident.

Snow and I, whose parents left us in front of the orphanage on the same day and were put on the same bed since we were babies, have strong childhood friendship and bonding.
Because of that, we often formed a pair of two.

While remembering that, I excused myself with a forced smile.

「I want to help you all very much but the way you you did is so good that I didn't get a turn. That's why I was sitting in a corner so that I won't get in the way.」

They were really good at comforting the children.
And children were already sleeping comfortably in the bed.

Snow came with unyielding big eyes near my face and pose a demand.

「If that's the case, then you can help playing house. We have roles enough for the four of us.」
「Playing house?」

When I turned my eyes, the other 2 girls were sitting down in the middle of the room and waited.

「If Lute-kun does not play, I will tell sensei that you skipped work.」
「Even though I didn't skip it particularly… OK! Let's play together.」

I gave in when El-sensei's name came out.
I interrupted my special control training on my Maryoku and sluggishly got up.

「So which role should I take? Father or Master?」
「Lute-kun, you'll take the role of a pink slime pet!」
「Is that really necessary…?」

I blurted out my reply.

On that day, I continued saying『purupuru』until the girls “released” me.

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I was made to play house with the girls three days consecutive after doing the role of the pet.
During those days, either I took a pet role as a 『Black and White Rabbit』 『Long Bearded Weasel』 『Paradise Parrots』etc.

One time, I objected the role of a pet.
But was bluntly overruled.

They play house as noble ladies.
Raising a pet was a fashion sense for the wealthy. That was why they insisted the role of a pet was necessary for me.

A man cannot win against a woman using his mouth whether in the previous world or in this world.
Furthermore, the other party I lost to had three members.
Even though my mental age was over 30, there was no way I could win against them.

But even though I was obediently following them, it did not mean I was being pushed around by those 4-year-old children.

When there was time, I went to the dry river bed near the orphanage and gathered flat stones.
I painted one side with black ink and dried it.
I took an unneeded wooden board and carved a grid of 8×8(64 boxes) on it with a knife.

The 4th time playing house.
The girls requested the usual—the role of a pet.
This time, I came up with a certain condition.

「If any of you manages to defeat me in a game I made *using the knowledge from the former world*, I will keep the role of the pet.」

『Reversi』was laid before them.

「「「Lute-kun?」」」

The girls voice were in unison as they tilted their head.
Using the board and stone pieces I made, I explained the rules of Reversi to them.

Among Japanese people who knew the game Reversi, there was nobody who did not understand the rules.
It was simple and easy to memorize.
That was the reason why I chose Reversi from the several board games back from the previous world.

As planned, the girls were memorizing the rules immediately.

The first to challenge me was Snow.
Of course, she chose white.

「Snow, you take the first turn.」
「If I beat Lute-kun, he will be doing the role of a golden MaruMaru today.」

What the heck is a golden marumaru…?

Snow is joyfully painting over the black ones.
First, I let her change the black stones to white so that she took some credit.

「Lute-kun, you are we~ak! Even though you made it yourself.」

Snow got caught up in the moment and was under the assumption that she was winning.
The dog ears were twitching proudly.

「Hahaha. Snow, make it funnier if you are going to tell a joke. Snow still can't do addition and subtraction, how can I lose in this game of intellect?」
「Muuu… I have a feeling I'm being made fun of… Fine! If Lute-kun loses, he has to listen to another order besides being a golden marumaru!」

「As you wish… But if I win, I'll touch your fluffy dog ears and tail to my hearts content!」
「It's not dog ears! …It's wolf ears! Because Snow is from White Wolf tribe!」
「I know… and don't forget the promise.」

『*deep breath*』Snow who got angry a while ago regained her composure and focused her look at the surface of the board. As usual, she changed black pieces without thinking.

Snow had misunderstood.
Those who had the most same colored pieces are the winner in Reversi.
There's no point in boasting in the amount of your pieces in the middle of a game.

I had to switch to counter-attack since the white stone were already dominant.
A corner was seized by me and the white stones were changed to black.
Since a corner was seized, Snow could no longer change the color of the stones at that side anymore.
In an instant, black stones dominated the board.

「Uuuu… I lost…」
「Yeah, I won! Don't forget the promise, okay?.」
「I know… I'll let you touch it when we're about to sleep at night…」
「O-ok.」

Snow agreed while she folded her ears down and shyly looked her upturned eyes down.
The figure of her in low spirit was so pretty that I felt shy.

Hey, Snow! The way you talk feels like… you made a lewd promise to me…

「What's the matter, Lute-kun? Your face is red. Did you catch a cold? 」
「N-no it's nothing. So… who's the next opponent?」

I shook my head to drop the dirty thoughts and continued to challenge them.

Snow sulks with pouting cheeks at the edge of my vision.
I did not know the reason to why she was sulking though.

Is it because I won too childishly? Then next time, I will go a bit easier on her…

While I was pondering, I forgot there were two remaining opponents left.
Naturally, I won quite easily like against Snow.

Snow and the others requested to borrow the Reversi after the match.
They had to become strong enough to defeat me so that I could take the role of a pet in their house playing.

So that they could have their chance, I tender-heartedly lend them the Reversi.
The girls had forgotten playing house and started practicing Reversi.

As a matter of fact, Snow and the others challenged me to a Reversi game the next day.
As they practiced, their skill rose fairly well but there were no other opponents on their level they could compete with.

I dared to choose Reversi among the other games because other than『the rules were easy to remember』, it attracted the crowds rather easily.

During my highschool days, I stayed indoors and occasionally absorbed myself in playing casual pc board games to kill time because i had no friends to play with.
Among them, Reversi was the only one where the computer opponent would no longer satisfy me and I thought to seriously attend a regular game.

In the end, I did not participate because of the fear to meet strangers.

Such 4-year-old children, who had little amount of practice, could never win against me. The girls had suffered a crushing defeat against me.
Although my appearance was a 4-year-old child as well, my mental age was about to become 31 by the end of this year!
Even if that was not the case, I was not weak enough to be beaten by a child!

Eh? Why…? Is… water flowing in my eyes?

I was challenged for a few day again but won them all lightly.
Snow and the other girls noticed the difference in ability from the games with me, and no longer came to challenge me. They had more fun playing with themselves.
After putting the children to sleep, Snow and the others were playing Reversi while alternating themselves.

Furthermore, Reversi was even popular among the children older than us.

I noticed that the imitated Reversi board and piece were often played with.

Even El-sensei and the volunteering oba-chans showed interest; the popularity was well received.
Probably because, the rules were easy to remember and was simple enough to do, and anyone could play it.

I, who was suddenly been freed from the role of Snow and others' pet, could strive again to make an effort for my secret training.
And it took about 30 days to learn moving my Maryoku quickly in a straight line like a thread throughout the body.
When I got used to it, it was unexpectedly easy.

Furthermore, there were things i noticed while training.

One thing I noticed was,『from the mass of Maryoku, it won't disappear even if a fragment were separated』.
From the mass of Maryoku, I separated a fragment and moved it to the index finger of my right hand.
Then, I moved it to my middle finger, ring finger and little finger.
Unless it was released outside the body, Maryoku will not be consumed even if it movesanywhere in the body.

This technique would also be handy if I wanted to temporarily strengthen a part of my body.

For example, if I wanted to temporarily strengthen my right arm, I needed 3 seconds to cut off a part from the mass of Maryoku and move it to my right

arm.
Then I would wrap my right arm with Maryoku.

Another thing is that,『the more strength increases, the more Maryoku is wrapped』.
However, the Maryoku consumption is high by just doing that.
In case you wanted to strengthen it moderately, you only have to use little Maryoku.

After magic control training was finished, I started to study and train the resistance formation.
What I had understood in my study in the resistance formation was: you can simply release the Maryoku in the air in large qualities like a magician with talent.
For example: if the resistance formation was made by pushing the Maryoku out of the right while using the palm as starting point, consumption could be held down rather than draining it out straight in the air.

When I found about this fact, I was amazed. The difference in the absolute amount of Maryoku from those people who are B- rank and above were a class on their own.
They could use the body strengthening technique and resistance formation without reallyworrying about it all.
Furthermore, because they could use attack magic as well, the difference in talent was clear.

I remembered during the time I was shocked to hear that Magician based classes were limited.
The overwhelming wall called talent was like a different world.

One could assume that they are also doing the method to reduce consumption of Maryoku in long duration battles.
But because of the difference in the amount of Maryoku—I was conserving it like someone who was on tiptoes holding a candle for lighting: they could freely ignore like someone who just found a 100-yen discount at the supermarket earlier.

With this, I understand the reason why people that are judged as『having no talent』would not be able to overcome the magician rank of B-.
The amount of Maryoku was fundamentally different.

Anyway, by pushing out the smallest amount of Maryoku at my palm, I could release and produce a resistance formation instantly.

I ended up using one year to finish this study experiment and training.

Chapter 005 - Bargaining with the Merchant

Lute, 5 years old.

This morning, the regular reading, writing, mathematics, general knowledge and history lessons began.
However, I had been joining the lessons since I was 3, and was already able to easily do everything.
Because of that, I helped Elle-sensei assisting and teaching kids who were falling behind on their studies.

One of those who fell behind was, the same age as me, Snow.
She was quick at remembering how to read and write, but seemed to be poor at arithmetic calculations.

「The plate on the left has 5 loaves of bread, the plate on the right has 12 loaves. So all of them together, how many loaves are there?」
「Err… Uhm….」

Bending her tiny white fingers, she started calculating.

「Fi, fifteen?」
「Wrong. The answer is 17.」
「Uu~」

Since she turned 5, she had been tying her long hair in a ponytail.
Her dog-ears flopped sorrowfully.
It seemed that Snow was still bad at calculating things beyond what her hands allow.

While patting her sorrowful head, I consoled her.

「Don't worry! I'll be with Snow until you can do addition. But since it's Snow, you will be able to do it soon!」
「Really?」

「It's a promise… so cheer up! So… I'll bring out the next question… The plate on the left has 3 loaves of bread, the plate on the right has 5. So, all of them together how many loaves of bread are there?」
「Uhh, uhh… 8!」
「Correct! Snow is a genius! Excellent, excellent!」
「Ehehehe.」

According to Yamamoto Isoroku: show them, tell them, have them do it, and then praise them; otherwise, people won't do anything. Making them lose the will to learn is the absolute worst.

Let's just leave aside my splendid facade.
My real intention in praising Snow was to make her white face clearly redden.
Her tail was also happily wagging left and right.
It was so cute, I developed a habit of quickly praising her.

「Well then, I'll bring out the next question.」
「Yeah! I'll do my best so I can do addition properly!」

Snow said while innocently smiling with her whole heart.

Aaaah, so cute! I wonder if I had a little sister or daughter in the previous world they would be this cute.

Actually, what I had in the previous world was a little brother. And not to mention marriage, I was killed before I even got a girlfriend…

Just now, I once again patted Snow's head.
Not showing any signs of dislike, she narrowed her eyes with a pleasant feeling.

After having finished with the lessons, the 5 to 6 year old kids helped with sweeping, laundry, dishwashing, and cleaning the peacock cage in the afternoon.
After having finished with the chores, all that remains was free time.

During free time, i continued training on how to economize my consumption of magic in the boys' room.

Tired with practice, I thought about raising money to buy magic liquid metal.

The most plausible thing right now, was making mayonnaise.

This world doesn't have mayonnaise.
If it's that seasoning that spawned the word『mayo lover』, selling it should certainly become a hit.
There are eggs, vinegar, and oil, so making it wouldn't be difficult.

The problem was the lack of initial capital.

No money with to earn money with… the『key to the safe』, to speak off.
Opening the safe requires a key, and the key is inside the safe—something like that.

「Should I sell mayonnaise recipes to the restaurants in town?」

But the age where I was allowed to go to town was 7.
The age to start earning money was also 7.
It would not be good unless I waited for another two years… right?

As I worried endlessly about it, money-making talk dropped in from an unexpected place.

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After lunch, I was called on the way to gather firewood with Snow.

「Lute you came at the right time. I was just going to call you.」
「What can I do for you, Elle-sensei?」
「To be honest, someone came and wanted to see you Lute. Can you come to the reception office?」
「Umm… is it my parents who abandoned me? Or… a relative came to pick

me up?」
「….」

Elle-sensei had an unpleasant face.
For some reason, Snow's face looked like she was about to cry.

It might be cold, but i did not particularly want to meet my real parents who gave birth to me in this world.
Although I lived only for 5 years, just living in this world is really hard.
I think my parents had probably some reasons for it.
So, i did not really have a grudge.

I merely asked because there was not anyone in particular that came to mind who might wanted to come see me in this world, but…

Never expecting to receive such an attitude of pity from these two, I was bewildered by their reactions.
As an adult, Elle-sensei recovered faster and began to talk.

「Lute, I didn't mean that the person who came are your parents or relatives. I'm sorry for putting in a strange way like that and making it a misunderstanding.」
「It's ok. I was only worried when i heard it. I dont think i particularly wanted to meet my parents now.」
「….」

For some reasons, Snow sadly hanged her ears and tail down.

「I'm sorry, Lute… The one who wanted to meet you is a merchant acquaintance of Sensei.」

Why did a merchant come to meet me?
Ah, right… I'd probably understand immediately when I meet up and talk with him.

「But don`t we have to gather firewood after this?」
「Since we still have a little surplus, it's good for today. Snow-chan, can you

go and help the other children?」
「I understood, Sensei.」

Snow returned obediently into the orphanage according to Sensei's instructions.
I parted with Snow and went with Elle-sensei to the reception office.

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I often went in the reception office for cleaning.

There were 4 chairs around a simple table.
On a nearby office desk, there were stationeries, such as inkwells, neatly kept.
Sometimes, there were also some wild grass flowers that the kids had collected and arranged in the flower vase.

The merchant was already seated in a chair drinking tea. For some reasons, there was a Reversi set in front of him.

The set belonged to Sensei.

The grooves, making up the grid on the wooden board, were all crisp, and the stones were also perfectly formed.
A present made with feelings of gratitude for every day by the kids of the orphanage including me; it was definitely well-made. I could recognize it with a glance since it was something I was used to see.

These two had already finished one game, the surface of the board was filled with white's victory.

I sat with Elle-sensei in front of the merchant.

The merchant was a man in his late 20s.
Having short cut light brown hair, his moustache was also shaved clean.
He gave off a sense of cleanliness.
If he was clad in a business suit and sat in a leather sofa, he would look like a『capable young IT enterprise company president』

He offered a handshake.

「Nice to meet you, Lute-kun. I am a merchant going by the name Malton.」
「My name is Lute. Nice to meet you, Malton-san」
「As Elle-sensei said, your response is reliable beyond your years.」

*Well, that is because my mental age is 32. Probably older than you.*Leaving those words unsaid, I replied with a suitably childlike smile.

After we exchanged greetings, Elle-sensei proceeded with the discussion.

「As I said earlier, Malton-san is my acquaintance. Today he happened to be passing through the town so he went over for greetings. But after seeing Lute-kun's『Reversi』, he asked me to have a chat with you.」
「Aah.」

Not really grasping the meaning, I gave a vague answer.
Malton talked details with a smiling face.

「I really only came to meet with Elle-sensei but I saw the other kids playing Reversi, you see. My merchant instincts shouted『This will certainly sell well!』」

Then the merchant elaborated on the reasons why he thinks it will sell.

In short—when people travel in horse-carriages, the driver, who handles the horse, would be busy, but the people inside were not.
Only an agonizing spare time is given while being jolted around.
But if there's Reversi, they can spend the time playing carefreely.

Tentatively, in this world there is a game similar to chess. But since the rules are complicated, it was mainly played by elderly upper-class men who

have a taste for culture.
But Reversi had a simple rule that anyone curious could easily remember.
He declared that it would certainly be well received, even by nobles.

Malton-san wanted to buy the rights to Reversi from the developer so he called me out.

I'll examine his story on my own while verifying it myself.
But because a question sprang out, i asked.

「May i ask you a question?」
「What is it? I will listen to anything.」
「Why did you ask for permission? You could easily make it in silent and sell it.」

Copyright does not exist in this world.
While it may be true that the idea could be stolen, there was no law to be violated.
Malton smiled ironic and opened both hands.

「It's true that cheating is an everyday occurrence to merchants. But it could be easily understood that if I would steal from a child and make money out of it, i would be struck down by others in the same trade and the trust in me as merchant would receive a huge blow. Losing trust as a merchant is the same as falling to ruin.」

Malton turned his eyes that were filled with passion toward Elle-sensei.

「Moreover, I'm in El-sensei's debt because she saved me with healing magic after i was greatly injured in an accident. I cannot deceive the child of my life savior.」

I'm convinced of that reason.
But, this fellow did not just turn a passionate gaze towards Elle-sensei only because of a favor. As man, i understood that.

Elle-sensei has beauty and character filled with love so much that she opened an orphanage.

Even her chest and style is outstanding.
No man exists that would not fall for such wonderful woman.

However, I can't stand letting this riajuu (one-sidedly decided) that looks as if he would say『I am not troubled by women』take her as wife.

For Sensei, it absolutely has to be someone who is more honest, who doesn't fool around, who has more financial strength, and a trustworthy person whose character is not inclined to violence.
It's also inexcusable to do ecchi things immediately after going steady.
I won't even allow hand-holding.
It has to start with a date, together with me joining in.
Then I will confirm sensei's and her partner's compatibility.
If he does not meet my expectations, he is rejected.

Once they've been going out for a year, then I'll allow holding hands.
Of course, that's only when I'm present.
If he does it at any other time, I'll tie him up and separate him from Sensei!
Absolutely!

—That was the conclusion I had gained from the『chronicles of when a husband candidate goes out with Sensei』that had been going round my head the most in my life 5 years after I was born.
It felt as if I was her father.

If I refuse him on the matter of Reversi, he would come to the orphanage over and over again to get closer to Elle-sensei… With that as an excuse, it would be troubling.

I said my conclusion with a bit of hesitation.

「I… understand. I'll sell the rights to Reversi to you.」
「Thanks! Lute, you won't be making a mistake in trusting me.」

I only sold it to you because you're going to go back and forth over and over again to get closer to Elle-sensei and will be a bother. But of course, I did not say that out loud.

Malton continued talking in a good mood.

「Although you are Reversi's developer, you're still 5. Will it be okay to leave the contract confirmation and signing to Elle-sensei?」
「I understand. Certainly, it's not right to leave it to a 5 year old child.」
「On my pride as a merchant, I assure you that the royalties for Reversi and the contents of the contract is fair and without falsehood. However, if Sensei has any complaints regarding it please tell me right away. The two of us shall spend time together and work out the details.」

Yo, do you be thinkin I be bout ta forgive you if yo ass is goin ta be ridin' solo wit mah Elle?!? Don't git carried away or I be bout ta punch all up in yo' ass ta yo' back of yo' teeth!!!

I yelled an Osakan-Yakuza like lines in my heart.

「No, I'm not worried. I have faith in Malton-san after all.」

Elle-sensei answered with a soft gentle smile.

「Well then, by noon I will prepare the money and the contract document. Then—there's one other thing I wanted to talk about, is it all right?」

Malton asked Elle-sensei for permission.
She nodded silently.

Don't even think of saying something like "let's get married"! That will be a declaration of war! Elle-sensei is not so cheap as to be handed over to some nobody who popped out of nowhere like you!

「If it's okay with Lute-kun, would you like to come with me as an apprentice?」
「…Eh?」

Receiving a reply outside my expectation, my mind lagged a bit.
Malton seemed to interpret my reaction as surprise at receiving an unexpected fortune.
With the composure of an adult, he continued with the explanation.

「I heard about you while playing Reversi with Elle-sensei. You have shown excellence since you were small, the first genius from this orphanage. At first I thought, “you’ve gained sensei’s favor, huh”, but I felt there was something more than that when I talked with you. If you study under me for ten years, you’re going to go places in the mercantile world. So, won’t you become my apprentice?」
「Merchant… is it?」
「Of course, I’m not going to force you. But, you have that talent. It’s me who said it so there’s no mistake.」

The merchant declared that with total confidence.

Hearing those words, Elle-sensei put on a worried expression like a mother during a parent-teacher meeting.

「If I’m not mistaken, Malton-san’s specialty is in magical devices, right? Truthfully… Lute-kun has had an interest in magic for a while but no talent in it. With that as trigger, if he starts developing a dangerous admiration for magical devices….」

「That’s all right. I will rein that in myself. Furthermore, I had also wanted to become a mage when I was Lute-kun’s age. Excitedly exclaiming that 『I am going to be like one of the Heroes of the 5 Races』. Though, I was immediately discouraged since I had no talent. But I didn’t give up and took up work related to magical devices like this. Rather, I consider that frustration as the key to my current business successes. In fact, after hearing that I, wanted to have Lute-kun as my apprentice even more.」

「Malton-san is a specialist in magical devices?」
「That’s right Lute-kun. How about it? Did I awaken some interest to become a merchant in you?」
「If that’s the case, do you deal in『magic liquid metal』!?」

A complete change from my unchildlike quiet attitude earlier.
I leaned on the table with stars twinkling in my eyes.
At my change, Sensei and Malton exchanged glances.

「Of course I do, but….」
「Can I sell Reversi's rights for some of those now?」
「About the amount, how much do you want?」
「As much as you have.」
「 …Right now, I have a whole barrels in my shop, but to sell that for these rights…」

Malton immediately compared the profits from Reversi with the magic liquid metal and replied.
After selling Reversi other people will immediately imitate it.
This is a world without copyright after all.
So even though he could sell it, it was not going to earn him big money.

「Then I'll give you ideas for improving my Reversi, and the way to be able to monopolize its sale. Please append the fees for those ideas to the contract.」
「Ideas for improving Reversi a side, is there a way to monopolize sales!?」
「Yes, there is. First, contact some well known noble, royalty of a small country, or some elite member of society. In exchange for a cut of the profits, have them brand an official seal on the Reversi board.」

「Official seal?」
「Having an official seal shows the support of a well-known person. With this, even if someone can make fakes, their numbers will decrease sharply. At any rate, forging an official seal means committing a crime.」

In comparison to having a criminal record, making forgeries isn't just worth it.
Furthermore, there's the danger of being discovered in one shot when prompted to confirm.
There are no merchants who wanted to get involved in that, I think.

「I-I see certainly if it's like that….」
「There are other benefits too. Publish the fact that a well-known person uses it. Then, everyone will want to buy Malton-san's Reversi. If a famous person uses it, people will have more faith in it. Above all, it's human nature that they will want to own the same thing.」

In other words, it was a proposal to『create a brand』.

According to a certain well-known person,『A brand is a tool to aid people who don't understand what is a『good thing』in making a decision』.

Although the concept of『brand』is weak in this world, it's not hard to propagate. Next, I propose some points of improvement for Reversi.

「Firstly, if you market it for use when travelling inside a carriage, the board must be made out of cloth so as to not interfere with the luggage. The cloth for the board will have grid lines drawn in black thread, the pieces will be sewn together from black and white cloth with a not-so-sharp slipstitch on the surface.」

「For the rich and well-paying clients: the board must be sturdily made with legs attached. The stones must also be made out of marble flakes while the black and white sides each prepared separately in a single color—that would make it feel extravagant.」

「For common folks: the board made should be 2~3 centimeters thick while the middle is cut down in half. Attach metal hinges at the bottom side so it can be folded. The reason for this is because it won't be a hindrance in small houses. And don't forget to change the materials for the pieces into wood. It's easier and less expensive to mass produce compared to making it out of stone.」

「Also, if you use wood, you can make the pieces not only in square shapes, but also hearts, clubs, stars and such for special editions and limited editions. Furthermore, there are not only symbol shapes, but also pink slime, black and white rabbit, or other animal shapes. The colors are also not limited to black and white, but you can also make red, pink, or blue and white ones. In addition, wrapping it in a sack so it couldn't be seen, concealing which secret edition is contained inside—」

「W-wait! I'm putting the ideas together in a memo! Wait a little bit!」

Malton, without even a shred of his adult composure earlier, took out a memo, pen, and inkwell in confusion.

Even though he was in front of Elle-sensei, he put down the ideas raised since a while ago in a memo while breathing roughly in excitement.

Different from several minutes ago, the color in his eyes changed as he took out a memo and jotted down on it. I gave off an excellent mature atmosphere waiting for him.

As I thought, this guy is no good. He's not gentlemanly enough to be Elle-sensei's partner.

When it was good to interrupt him, I called out.

「Is this still not enough for the magic liquid metal?」
「N-no, it's quite enough… If the plan goes well, the transfer fee earlier, for the rights to Reversi, can pay for it by itself. And Lute-kun, you need Elle-sensei's consent before you can use all the money you've earned, right?」
「Thank you for the pleasure of having business with you. The payment will include the method to monopolize Reversi and ideas for its improvement.」

What comes after is the scary part of having bad loans to merchants.

「In that case, there's no problem if the ideas for other the toys, besides Reversi, are put in a separate proposal, right?」
「…Are you sure you're really a 5-year-old kid?」

As if being in the presence of something beyond his knowledge and common sense, Malton asked me timidly.

On the other hand, Elle-sensei simply became flustered at my machine-gun speech and Malton's sudden change.
Covering for Sensei who became like that, I delightedly arranged the contract contents, money amount, and magic liquid metal delivery time.

Episode 006 - A Night with Snow

During the night after I talked with the merchant, Malton.
I slept on a futon in the boys room which was spread on the floor with boys of the orphanage sleeping on either side.

「*...te...kun....*」
「*yawn*」 SFX : Fugaa～

I heard a dim pechi pechi sound near my ear and felt being slapped on my cheeks.
What I felt was too realistic for a dream.

「*Lu...Lute,n...Lute-kun....*」
「n...ga!?」
「*Shhh!!! Don't be loud. Everyone will wake up.*」

It was not a dream.
Snow looked into my face as i opened my eyes
Her hands were covered down on my mouth so that i won't let out a voice.

There are some rules in the orphanage.
The most serious crime among them is that a boy or a girl sneaks into each others room at night.
In case it is violated, one will get one day with no meal.
And yet, the honour student Snow broke that rule and trespassed into the boys room!

I think about the reason why she trespassed into the boys room to meet me.

...Could it be that Snow is night crawling!?

I'm not an insensible anime character.
I'm a live human being.

I've felt for a certain time that she had been fondly thinking of me occasionally lately.
For example, she would be delighted if i gently stroke her head after we did work in the afternoon together.

Even though I was attracted to Snow, it was not towards the opposite sex.
It would be closer to the love given to a younger sister or daughter.
But if we grow up and still yearn for each other in the future, I believe…
becoming lovers or marriage partners might be possible.

However, night crawling was too early at the age of 5! Besides, a girl was attacking a boy!
To make me a fait accompli at this age—Snow, what a fearful child!

Although my body is that of a 5 year old like her, my mind is that of a 32-year-old『young adult』. It seems I ought to give her some lecturing.
Snow brings her face closer and whispers in my ear.

「*Everybody will wake up, be quiet please? Okay?*」
I nodded twice.

When i nodded, Snow slowly lifted her hands from my mouth.

「*Uhm, Snow, your feelings are—*」
「*Shhhh!!! Not here or everybody will wake up… Follow me.*」

I sneaked out of the boys' room according to Snow's instructions.

There was no electricity in this world. The infrastructure for gas and water also did not exist.
As if the world was as dark as being blindfolded at night.
I continued walking while Snow led me by the hand.
It turned out that she went towards the dining room.

Starlight came from the window.
Seeking the light, we sat near the window of the dining room.
And I sat on the floor while grasping my knees.

It was warm during the day but chilly at night as expected.
Our shoulders warmed each other by touching.
Though there's also the reason of making it easier for me to listen to her whispers.

「So, what's the reason why you broke the rule and brought me here?」
「Un… you see… there is something that I really wanted to ask you….」

If the voice was this small, the people who were sleeping in the rooms would not be disturbed.
However, it is said that girls are growing faster than boys, but she might be curious about my feelings at this age.
I understood the rush since there were other girls similar to my age at my side, but at least she could have waited until the sun came up.

It's certainly true that popular guys have it hard.

I jokingly made an impression of flipping my bangs in my heart.
But Snow asked me with a dark expression.

「Um… did Lute-kun ever think of meeting with your mother or father?」
「…Eh!?」
「Like I said, do you want to meet the mother and father who abandoned you away?」

Huh? This was not a confession or a bittersweet『I want to know the feelings of Lute-kun that I love』event?
Rather, it was a serious consultation.

After giving an apology in my heart for thinking badly of Snow, I switched my emotions and asked her.

「Snow, why are you asking me this?」
「…Today, Lute-kun told sensei『it's not like I want to meet with them after all this time』, right?」

Casting her eyes down, Snow revealed her feelings bit by bit.

「Snow wants to meet mom and dad. When we meet, Snow will ask them why they abandoned Snow away. And Snow wants to live with mom and dad… Is Snow weird for thinking like this?」

Snow's circumstances were similar to mine.
On the same day, we were left together at the orphanage.

Then I declared,『After all this time, I never thought of meeting my parents』.
She herself felt,『I want to see them』『I want to live with them if I could』, I guess she was worried whether it was wrong to have those feelings.

Snow was savoring sadness she would rather not experience.
The reason I didn't want to meet my parents was because I was a reincarnated being who had drawn memories from my past life.

Wanting to know the reason for being cast away by parents, to make peace with them, and to live together is not a weird thing. It's normal. In fact, I'm the one who's weird—I could not possibly explain it to her just like that. Conversely, it would only make her more worried.

In that case, I should explain with actions rather than with words.
I changed my position from sports sitting to sitting cross-legged.

「Snow, come over here.」
「Why?」
「Just do it already.」

Urging her a bit forcefully, I had her sit on my knees.
Snow felt a bit cramped given the closeness of our bodies, but I pressed her ears to my left chest.

「Can you hear the sound of my heart?」
「…Yes, I can hear. It goes dokun, dokun, dokun….」
「People get relieved hearing the sound of heartbeats. This is because, as babies, we are raised hearing our mother's heartbeats.」

Oddly, Snow was now rolled up in a fetal position.
She closed her eyes and leaned her body against mine.

「Wanting to meet your parents is not weird. So, there's no reason to feel worried.」
「Really?」
「Uh-huh, it's true. The reason why I never thought of meeting my parents is because I have no way of looking for them.」

Humans were the race with the most populous among the 5 races.

「Just one clue: I have a star-shaped birthmark on the back of my right shoulder; I can't just show this to everyone I meet and ask them. Besides, I have no talent as a magician; it's hard to think that the parents who casted me out would come back and pick me up. So, it's clear that I will never meet with my parents again for as long as I live.」

I hugged Snow close and continued talking while patting her head.
Making no signs of resistance, she listened carefully.

「But Snow is different. Unlike me, Snow has talent as a magician. Besides, the White Wolf race is a minority that lives in the snowy mountains of the North Continent. If you go north you might find some clues there. Even so, forgive me for saying『after all this time I never thought of meeting my parents』so insensitively, 'kay?」

Throwing away children in silence was unusual.
In addition, it was a child that had talent for becoming a magician—seems like there was a good reason for it.

This might be an unpleasant way of putting it, but, if she became a magician she could earn them lots of money.
Even if they're poor, there was no reason to let go of the golden egg.
If they wanted money quickly at all cost, they should have sent her out to some childless rich and powerful people as an adopted daughter.

If for example there was one reason to send a child with talent as a magician away to an orphanage, it was cases like: both parents died, a

scramble by the relatives happened, and as a result the child's heart became traumatized—they were given over to Elle-sensei's place to rehabilitate.

There were also lots of other children with talent as magicians given over to the orphanage for various reasons.

「…Snow is also sorry. Snow asked such an insensitive question without thinking of Lute-kun's feelings.」
「There's no reason for you to apologize. I was the one in the wrong, you see.」
「If that's the case, then Snow and Lute-kun are both in the wrong. So it's a tie.」
「That's right. It's a tie.」
「As an apology, Snow will tell Snow's dream only to Lute-kun….」

She slowly started reciting her own dream.

「You see, when Snow is bigger, Snow will become a magician. Then, Snow will go to the north continent to look for father and mother. Once Snow finds those two, Snow will ask why they abandoned Snow away. If we could make peace, then the three of us will live together in the same house… This is Snow's dream.」
「It's a good dream. If it's you, then it will absolutely come true….」

I took a breath and continued.

「…But if you couldn't find them or you couldn't make peace with them, Snow still has me, Elle-sensei and the kids at the orphanage. Don't forget that okay?」
「…Un, thanks Lute-kun.」

I hugged her closely in order—to transmit not just by words, but also by the warmth—to let her know she was not alone in this world.

「Is it okay to hear the sound of Lute-kun's chest a little bit more?」
「Uh-huh, you can listen all you like.」

So as to hear my heartbeat some more, Snow nuzzled her ear against my chest.
It was surprisingly ticklish.
Bathed in starlight, Snow and I continued to bring together our bodies some more.

…I wonder how much time had passed.
I separated my body from Snow.
As I returned to my room with her, I asked.

「Should we sleep together tonight, after all?」
「Lute-kun is ecchi～～.」

Eeeh, didn't we sleep together in the same futon just one year ago?
She then returned to the girls' room without turning back.

「As I thought, girls sure grow fast, huh?」

The mutterings of a middle-aged man with a mental age of over 30 disappeared down the dark hallway.

▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼

Lute, 5 years old.

The merchant Malton, who specializes in magic tools, opened a shop in the commercial city Tver.

There were several routes going between Tver and the defence city, Tallcas (so named for having tall walls and relics of the great war of old; it is the next most prosperous city after Tver in the region).
The most popular one was the central road which had a travel time of up to 10 days.

A less popular route was the road that goes through Hoad town in the Aljio region where the orphanage was.

Despite being in the exact center point between commercial city, Tver, and defence city, Tallcas, it could not be reached unless one takes a detour through the forests.
Furthermore, taking the detour to go to Hoad town means spending an extra 10 days. In other words, going town to town through Hoad required 20 days of travel time.

Because going by the central road takes half the time, there are not many people who goes through the Hoad town on purpose.
Therefore the town's population is few, and is decreasing.

The day I met the merchant Malton, I hurriedly had him write up a contract and signed it.

That was because I wanted to have that magic liquid metal as soon as I can.

According to him, it would take 10 days from now to get back to shop.
Plus 1 day of preparation and 10 days to come here, makes 21 days.
Furthermore he asked for an additional 1 or 2 days in case some unexpected situation occurred.

This was not like the world in my previous life where an order you made would arrive the next day.
I apologized for hurrying him and said my thanks.

In the afternoon, 21 days after Malton and I parted ways.
His subordinates delivered the magic liquid metal to the orphanage.

It was transported inside a cask in the horse cart drawn by 2 horned horses (horses that seems to have a horn growing from their foreheads, because of its strength it could be used to pull carts and such).
Nevertheless, just one of those weighed about 250 kg.
I truly wanted all the magic liquid metal available, but I still did not really know whether I could make handguns out of it.

Because it was so expensive, I only got him to sell me a barrel's worth.
Nevertheless, it still seemed to have cost 25 gold coins in total.

Among Elle-sensei's classes there were also lessons about money.

Based on my life experiences here, if I were to put it in terms of modern currency it would be something like『1 gold coin (100,000) = 10 silver coins = 100 large copper coins = 1,000 copper coins』.

Intuitively, 1 copper coin is worth 100 Yen.

The price of wheat for 1 day's needs is 2 copper coins (the amount of wheat for 1 person for 1 day is about 1 kg)
1 kg of wild boar pork is 3 silver coins (30,000 Yen).
About 1 liter of cheap wine is 1 large copper coin and 2 copper coins (1,200 Yen).

So by intuition, 25 gold coins is about 2,500,000 Yen. 1 liter is about 1 silver coin (10,000 Yen)
As expected, even though it was bad, it was still a magic tool.
However, because it was not a product that was in circulation much due to being unpopular, bad stock that had been stored for too long seemed to be obtainable for a cheaper price with some negotiation. Being a rare item, the price varied depending on the situation at the time of negotiation.
It was just that since what I put on offer was only knowledge, I would turn a blind eye to it.

The subordinate took the cask down from the cart and called me.

「Could you confirm that the contents isn't wrong, just to be sure?」

The lid was gracefully opened.

The cask was filled with a silverish liquid.
The mercury-looking-liquid rippled when the cask was struck.

So this is magic liquid metal.
It really is liquid, huh.

「No problem. Thank you for bringing this over.」
「No, no. This is work after all. Boss said,『here you go』.」
「Well then, please tell him, 『Thank you very much for listening to my

selfish request』.」
「Understood. I'll be taking my leave.」

The subordinate took off his cap, bowed, and returned to the cart.
Done seeing him off, I raised my body strength using body strengthening arts and carried the cask to the boys' room

I quickly finished afternoon work with Snow and started experimenting on the long-awaited magic liquid metal.
I carried the cask out from the boys' room out to the field.
The testing ground was a backyard that was vacant after the magician's basic lessons were finished.

First, I tried touching the magic liquid metal.

It was pleasantly cool to the touch.
As I scooped it out with my hands, it dripped out of my palms like water.
It felt heavier than water.
Perhaps touching mercury also felt like this.

Without delay, I experimented.

I put my hand inside the cask and called an image in my head.
It was a 10 cm flat metal board.

Keeping the image in my head, I moved magical power into my hands and released them.
A feeling was left in my palms.

「Ooh, I can really do it.」

Pulling out my hands, a metal board of about 10 cm was made.

But the degree of perfection was bad.
The surface was not flat and had holes in it; the thickness was also uneven.
It was also not in a rectangular shape but crooked.
I struck the board lightly with my fist.
It seemed to be as strong as iron.

「The handling is surely difficult: more vividly image for the texture, material properties, thickness, and strength—seems to be necessary to draw the metal board I wanted to make more clearly that way.」

Rather than taking the time training for a more definite mental image to make weapons or protectors, buying them with money was faster and easier.
I understand why this stuff was unpopular.
However, I used to be a factory worker at a metalworking plant for 7 years.

「…Remember the past. …Regain the sensation.」

I put the metal board aside.
I took a breath and exhaled, concentrated, and once again filled my hands with magic liquid metal.

In the previous life, I was able to detect even a 1μm defect on a metal board just by the feeling on my fingertips.
Just by hearing the sound, I could distinguish which metal part was defective.

All of it was taught to me by the workers working at the plant; techniques that I gained at their annoyance.
Even after I died and lost my body, the skill was etched onto my soul.

Once again, I imagined a metal board and poured my magic power.

I am not making a vague lump.
For a moment, I imagined constructing the shape, whittling, arranging, and smoothing the surface. Picturing it strongly, I poured magic power into the metal.

I felt metal being created in my hands.
I pulled it out from the magic liquid metal.

「…Yeah! Success!」

A 10 cm metal board was made with a smooth surface, even thickness, and a neat rectangular shape.

「With magic liquid metal, maybe I can really make handguns!」

My chest felt the most delighted ever since I had been reincarnated into this world.

Chapter 007 - Firearms Development

Lute, 6 years old.

Most of the time since the magic liquid metal arrived was consumed in experimenting and inspecting results, by a 5-year-old kid.

Magic liquid metal was a special metal; if you imagined armor while touching it and pour in Maryoku, the metal would take on that imagined shape—it had that property.

The advantage was that it was easy to carry if you bring only a small amount.
For that reason, it seemed to be a tool of choice for assassins.

The disadvantage was that once it has been molded into a shape, it could never return to being magic liquid metal.
Unless you picture the image clearly; if you make a sword, it will be blunt; if you make an armor, it will not only be uneven, but also the size would not match.
On top of having limited use and being hard to handle and being a rare magic tool, the price was expensive.
It had become synonymous with the term – unpopular commodity.

As a result of my investigation into magic liquid metal, I realized that it was a truly splendid material.

First, the strength was proportional to the magic power poured into it.
It was possible for a paper-thin sheet of material to be stronger than a plate of iron.

When making springs, efforts like wrapping piano wire around a rod and hardening it were totally unnecessary.
Just put your hands in the magic liquid metal, and determine the size and strength by regulating the amount of Maryoku you pour in.

When you pull your hand out, you will have made a surprisingly high quality spring.

If magic liquid metal could be brought to modern society, it would not just end with revolutionizing science materials.
It would certainly be at the level of a new material revolution.
Given some time, it might even be possible to construct a simple space elevator.

Unable to hold back the excitement from the magnificence, I informed Elle-sensei who was a superior magician, but…

「Is that so…?」

I received a reply with a『even if you say something so uninteresting』nuance.

Just how unpopular is this magic liquid metal…?

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When I turned 6, the days in which I had to do my allotted chores, in addition to assisting with morning classes, continues.

By the way, nowadays, one part of the proceeds from Reversi and other toys had been transferred to the orphanage in intervals of 3 months (90 days).
At the beginning, Elle-sensei insisted that I should be receiving this money.

But currently, I was just satisfied with getting my hands on magic liquid metal. And furthermore, by orphanage rules, I can start earning money when I am 7 years of age.
Leaving Reversi as an exception, I slightly forcibly pressed the notion that I wanted to contribute to orphanage management funds. At least, as gratitude for being taken care of.

Though I made an amount of contribution to the orphanage, there was no special exemption on my allotted chores. If I mention this I might have gotten some leniency, but of course, I had no intention of skipping work.

Neither did I want to be a bad influence on the other kids nor did I want to be talked about in secret so I always did the same amount of work—after finishing up my chores in the afternoons, handgun production began.

At first, I tried producing an entire revolver out of magic liquid metal, but it failed.

The revolver I took out from the magic liquid metal had a cylinder that would not turn, a thin barrel, and the rifling was also laughably crooked.

The parts and internal structure I had to imagine were too numerous.
Before I could pour my Maryoku, the image had already faded.
As a result, this thing was badly made.

So, I gave up making the whole thing all at once and changed my plans into assembling it from parts.

In my previous life, I was a military otaku; I had a special admiration towards modern weapons.

Also because of having worked in a metalworking plant, before being reincarnated, I often dreamed, 『will I ever be able to make my own guns?』

Looking at diagrams of revolvers, automatic firearms, assault rifles and such, comparing them with the machines and technology used in the factory I work at, I felt that making them was possible that time.
It was one of my hobbies, grinning while drinking in my single room.

Now that I had my hands on magic liquid metal, making handguns was no longer a dream using the knowledge and technology from my previous life.

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I was carrying the barrel under my arm and brought it to the backyard of the orphanage.

Right now, I'm trying to make a replica of the『S&W M10』revolver model. It was the duty pistol of choice for manythe authorized gun used by the Japanese police departments in the previous world.
Did you wonder why I did not make a self-loading pistolan automatic gun (which used the recoil of each shot to cycle the weapon)), but a revolver straight out of a western instead? There were reasons for that.

『The self-loaderautomatic one had a difficult internal structure not suitable to make for the first time.』
『A revolver has fewer parts compared to a semi-automatic pistolThere were fewer revolver parts compared to automatic ones.』
『The revolver was sturdier; Jams were a non-issue and the weapon was easy to maintain, making it suited for the Japanese police forces, who would rarely, if ever, have an opportunity to use their gun.there were no worries about bullet jammings and the maintenance was also easy(therefore it was suited for the japanese police who rarely used a gun).』
Based on the 3 mentioned points above, it was more suitable first work.

However, no matter how much simpler the internal structure of a revolver was than a semi-auto onen automatic one, there were parts that could not be made in 1-2 days even though it had fewer components.

If I had to explain why, let me first explain the history of guns.
It means to create one gun, I had used the accumulated techniques of the world before I got reincarnated and reproduced these(techniques) with my own hands in this world.

First, the gunpowder—『the Black Powder』.

By the way, let me explain the historical background: There are various theories on when and where "Black Powder" was invented, but the prevailing theory is that it was invented in China in the 6th to 9th centuries.

In those days, alchemists carried out research on elixirs of eternal youth, as one of the things produced in the process, the formula for gunpowder was recorded in the『Zhengzhou miaodao yaolüe』which was written around the year 850.

Around the middle of the 13th century, their successors developed weapons called『Fire Lances』, consisting of a short pipe packed with gunpowder affixed to the tip of a piece of wood or bamboo. (These weapons do not shoot bullets, instead they were simple flamethrowers or flash weapons).
These were the origins of gun-type firearms.

Furthermore, in 14th-century Europe,『Touch Hole-style』guns were made.
『Touch Hole』guns were primitive guns that were miniaturized versions of artillery cannons used for taking down castle walls that worked by packing a tube with gunpowder and igniting it from a hole drilled into the tube which would fire a (stone or metal) bullet.
It was called “Touch Hole” because the gunpowder was ignited by pressing a burning metal rod through a hole.

Not long after, around the 1400s, personal handheld firearms, “Arquebuses”, having the basic form of guns was likewise created in Europe. Its features were the fuse with which to ignite the gunpowder.
“Arquebus” came from the German word “Hakenbüchse” which means “pipe with hook attached”.

The “Arquebus” was further improved by the addition of S-shaped fuse clamp and trigger parts, becoming the oldest type of matchlock, the S-shaped Serpentine.
A lit fuse was attached at the top part of the S-shaped metal fittings attached at the back of the gun barrel (the gun barrel is at the center of the S), the bottom part of the S (the trigger) was pulled by hand, as the lit fuse meets the gun barrel, it ignites the powder.

Simultaneously, the metal armor worn by knights were rendered meaningless by the increase in power, tactics and strategy had to change as well.

As the 15th century dawns, the age of firearms had truly began.

Prior to that gun barrels are made by setting up iron a circle and placing bindings around them (the same process as making barrels, which is why they're called gun "barrels" even now), but by the 15th century, the process became pouring bronze into a mold and casting the whole barrel at once.

Bronze is a copper (and tin) alloy, and compared to iron, it has the advantage of having a lower melting point and being softer, making it easier to cast even with lower technology (its disadvantages are that for the same reason, it becomes worn and crooked easily).

But by the 16th century, steel became available, and damascus barrels, made by heating up and forging together steel ribbons with differing carbon content (made by applying stress to the metal by striking), then rolling it around a center stick, and then heating it again and welding it, became widespread. (Through mixing and forging together several types of steel it develops a damascus pattern, or in other words, a unique wood grain-like pattern. Incidentally, the pattern on a Japanese sword is also one kind of damascus pattern.)

However, it does have a weakness. Because the gun barrel is made by rolling ribbon-shaped material, compared to molded barrels the strength is weak, and after the invention of smokeless gunpowder production declined. This is because it was unable to endure the pressure, and so the gun barrel becomes prone to breaking.

After that, in the year 1856, the Englishman Henry Bessemer made a groundbreaking invention, the "converter", and large amounts of molten steel became available. The so-called Bessemer process is a method of making steel by blowing air against molten pig iron (iron produced by melting iron ore in a blast furnace, contains lots of impurities) causing an oxidation reaction, removing impurities. (removing by burning)

After that various alloys can be made.
The raw materials for handguns – chrome molybdenum steel. (alloy made by adding a little chrome and molybdenum to iron. High strength and also high temperature resistance. It is also used in bicycle frames and aircraft.)
And likewise, stainless steel. (steel containing no less than 10.5% chrome in iron. Having workability and endurance, it was called “stainless” due to corrosion resistance and is widely used)
Production of steels that can be adjusted for strength, corrosion resistance, and endurance was now possible.

If I were to produce modern weapons—handguns, I wouldn’t plan on using black powder, but instead something stronger like smokeless gunpowder.
Therefore the strength of ordinary steel is not enough.
21st century gun barrels are almost entirely made of chrome molybdenum steel or stainless steel.

For that reason I have to build a “converter”.

To say it plainly, no matter how much I remember my previous life, it is almost impossible for me right now to make it to that extent.
Effort, time, funds, talent—if I raise those there are no limits.

Furthermore, even if I were able to procure the raw materials, I would still need the equipment and technology necessary to make the parts.

Having prepared blocks in the rough shapes of the parts I want to make, I need to shape those by whittling them using a milling machine or turret lathe, “milling”.
That is unreasonable, there is also the method of forging them one at a time like a blacksmith but—

Of course for me who worked in a metalworking plant, I don’t have that kind of skill.

But all those problems had been settled by the magic liquid metal.

It will take shape according to the mental image and the magic power being poured.

Moreover, it will also have a strength proportional to the magic power being poured.
I think it would be able to withstand the temperature and gas pressure when firing the bullet.

There are no other materials in this world more suitable for making handguns.

Repenting the fact that I ran away in my previous life, I decided that in this reincarnated world I would never run away, and help anyone who is in trouble.
But I don't have talent as a magician.
Let alone helping people, I don't even have the power to protect the important people close to me.

Therefore as the result of my search for power—becoming aware of the existence of magic liquid metal I came to think "can I make handguns with this?"

However, even though from my point of view I had noble goals—being faced with the fact that I will be "making handguns", I became giddy.
Starting the gun making that was only a dream in my previous life made me a little excited.

In that life, I only read technical books with designs and disassemblies while drinking sake at home after work, and became jealous watching videos of people making model guns from scratch on the internet.
It had remained a dream because of the law, funds, and time.

But in this reincarnation world there is no such thing as Swords and Firearms Control Law.
The best material I could think of is also plentifully available in front of my eyes.

My dream is becoming a reality. Don't go around grinning like that—such a consultation is unreasonable.

There are still a lot of hurdles I have to jump, but rather than worries about my troubles, the joy at being able to start working is far greater.
With a smile I can't close I put my hands in the magic liquid metal and stirred.

"Well then should I immediately start making handguns. …… I wonder if I should try making the cylinder first as a test"

I closed my eyes, bided my time, and imagined a cylinder inside my head—

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After starting to make a model revolver of the "S&W M10", half a year passed.

In the morning I help El-sensei with classes and take the initiative to finish routine duties from the afternoon.
I moved to the backyard of the orphanage while carrying the barrel, which inside decreased a lot.

Everyday, during free time I make the parts little by little.
But the work to carve riflings into the (barrel) encountered troubles.

A rifling is a groove carved on the inside of the gun barrel.
It is needed in order to give the bullet rotation, to stabilize the flight, and to raise the firing accuracy.

There are two representative methods to carve these riflings.

"Button method", carving the rifling by shaving the material off using a drill-like cutting tool called a broach.

"Cold hammer method", covering a center stick in the shape of the barrel cavity, which has the rifling applied, with the gun material, then applying pressure from the outside to stamp the form.

There are 2 kinds as above mentioned.

I used the latter, cold hammer method.
Because this method is suited for mass production many major small arms manufacturer are using it.

To make the core stick which applies the riflings is hard labor. But if it is finished once with liquid magic metal I'm able to give riflings (to gun barrels) in large quantities.

Hence the cold hammer method was used even if it is troublesome at first.

However I had more trouble making the core stick than I'd guessed.
I made a great number of versions that I adjusted often, and endlessly looked for the most suitable results for nearly 2 months.

But thanks to my understanding of gun barrel riflings I successfully made it.
I soaked the core stick in liquid magic metall and imaged that it hangs on it and poured magic power to engrave high quality riflings in the barrel after it stabilized, I was able to make it.

Besides that there was much trouble… I made light of the revolvers inner structure that was simpler(lol) than an automatic, yet afterwards I noticed the difficulties of adjustments repeated in trial and error, I got mad over the cylinder that stopped rotating at a fixed position, but at last I was able to reproduce the structure.

And then the thing I made was prototype #1!

A solid-black "S&W M10" revolver.

I also made the front sight and the rear sight. The grip is made not of wood, but knitted metal anti-slip grips. The trigger guard, ejector rod, and recoil shield are also properly made.
Furthermore, although it's not needed, I also carved flutes (grooves cut to reduce weight) on the side of the cylinder for show.

The metal looks like it is really heavy, but thanks to magic liquid metal's property of "having strength in proportion to magic power being poured", it is almost as light as a toy "S&W M10".

When I tried shooting air, the click of the hammer and the sensation of the revolving cylinder felt good.
I shot air like this until free time is over. Switching gears, the next challenge begins.

Today I was finally doing test firings. The problem now is the bullet.

In the reincarnated world, there is no black powder, nor smokeless gunpowder.

"If I remember correctly, the way to make smokeless gunpowder is…… mixing nitroglycerin and soaking cotton in it right? Un, the hurdle is too high……"

Then, even if I could make smokeless gunpowder, packing it in bullets and when it fires the bullet comes out—it's not as simple as that.

Because the required combustion rates for handguns and rifles are different.

In the case of handguns, they need "fast burning propellant that can finish burning before the bullet exits the barrel" because the barrel is short. Therefore, modern handgun propellants are in small granules, not fine powder like black powder.

If a log of wood and an equal mass of wood chopsticks were simultaneously ignited, which one would burn up more quickly?
The answer is obvious, it's wood chopsticks.
It's because wood chopsticks have a larger surface area.

Just like powder, granules burn quickly.
But it's not something that should simply explode.

As I think about it problems pop up one by one—but all those problems are solved in one stroke with magic power.

Magicians can convert magic power directly into fire, water, wind, electricity, earth, and so on.
Water and earth in particular could be created out of thin air. Even fire and lightning can't possibly come from the energy stored inside the magician's body. It seems to possibly be a violation of the law of conservation of mass, but even though I don't understand the process, matter and energy did certainly appear (I can somewhat deduce that energy was born out of thin air but I don't know whether it's correct). However, no matter which "system specialization" a magician has, imaging is important for the creation of matter or energy.
In that case, being able to handle, even if only weakly, the four elements of magic "fire", "water", "air", and "earth", and having practical knowledge of gunpowder, I think I can produce a smokeless gunpowder substitute using magic power. With that thought, I repeatedly did trial and error using the magic power control technique I've learnt.

I have the basics under control. Next I should control the combustion speed using the power of imagination.

I chose the time when cylinder adjustments had been finished to make prototypes of cartridges unloaded with powder.

At first, instead of being so big that they didn't fit in the cartridge, I made ones that do not catch and fell down instead.
Right now, having finished documenting minor adjustments, work on the bullets, except the powder, had roughly completed without a problem.

I checked the memo containing the adjustment records and put in only my right hand in the magic liquid metal.

Parts composing the cartridge—the size is .38 special (9×29.5mmR).
I put magic power inside the case.
I released magic power for the powder with the image of detonation, combustion, and explosion, and again compressed and solidified it.
Careful magic power control is necessary, but I've had practice. Having safely finished the solidification, I let out the breath I unintentionally held.

In addition, I made a bullet core as the cap.
As for the metal properties, I imagined lead.
I covered the faux-lead with a thin jacket.

I put in a primer at the bottom part with magic power to induce a small explosion, and finally I covered everything and the bullet is finished.

I take out my right hand from the magic liquid metal.
A cartridge from the memories of my past life was created in the palm of my hand.
It looks no different from the real thing.

“The problem is whether the bullet will come out properly or not”

I put the cartridge in the revolver at once.
It fit in the cylinder without a hitch.

I picked up a discarded brick and set it up on a wooden box I found laying around. An impromptu target.

I set it up about 9 meters away.
I held it with my right hand and jammed it in with all my might.
I made a pose of holding the revolver in my right hand and propping it up with my left.
The basic standing handgun posture.

Though my mind is 30 years old, my body is still 6.
In preparation for the recoil, I strengthened my body with body strengthening arts.

I thumbed backpulled the hammer and with my breath held, I quietly sqeeuzed the trigger with my index finger.held my breath.
I quietly pressed the trigger with my index finger.

KABOOM!

“gukaa…!?”

It was not the sound of a gun being fired.
It was a kaboommisfire!

The revolver was blown up from the inside.

Thanks to body strengthening arts, the fingers on my right hand, which was close to the explosion, were not blown off.
My thumb and index finger were barely safe.

“It hurts so much I want to puke~”
“Wha, what was that loud noise just now! Hii……!?”

Elle-sensei noticed the sound of the misfire, and came running to the backyard in confusion.

Looking at my injuries sensei let out a small shriek.
Her face paled as if having lost blood.
Soon she ran over looking like she was about to cry and immediately checked my injuries.
She checked to make sure that there are no injuries besides my right hand.

After judging that it was not a fatal injury, sensei’s face regained its color.
Sensei stopped the kids who appeared, having noticed the sound, in a sharp voice.

“Everyone, don’t come! The older kids please take the young ones inside!”

On that order, the kids went back inside the orphanage.

“Lute-kun! Just what did you do that it becomes like this!”

While scolding me, sensei holds her hand out at me who is holding my hands while cowering.

“Light that burns in my hand, Heal!”
“…… Ooo.”

As expected from a B ranked magician.
A warm light springs forth from her hands and went to my blown-off fingers like a magnet.
The scars recovered perfectly without a trace.

“Thank you very much, sensei”
“Don’t “Thank you” me! Just what did you do to get that serious wound!”
“Well, I put too much magic power in this newly developed magic device ……”

Explaining the handgun from the beginning would be too long, it would take time to make it understandable.
Cutting down on the explanation, I made a suitable cover story.

Elle-sensei took a glance at the magic liquid metal inside the cask.

“…… I don’t understand what Lute-kun is making, but since you’re making noise and making everyone worry come along to the office for a scolding.”
“O, okay! I’ll go so please don’t pull on my ear!”

Elle-sensei dragged me by the ear just like a Showa-era mother and went back inside the orphanage.
Arriving at the office, I sat seiza on the floor.
She made me listen to a long long sermon.
Of course, I didn’t get dinner.

After being heavily questioned, I was banned from doing experiments for the next 30 days and ordered to do punishment work for making an uproar.

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30 days after that little accidentthe misfire, the ban on experiments was lifted!

While I was doing punishment work, I finished enumerating the points for reflection of last time.

The revolver misfired, but the rifling was clearly carved on the bullet core that hit the ground.

This proves that the bullet travelled through the barrel properly.

The problem was perhaps caused by the powder substitute having too much magic power and the image of the explosion being too strong.

During the black powder era, the shell casing was filled with powder.
But after smokeless gunpowder was invented, the cartridge only needed to be filled with half the amount of powder.

The space that remained is called “air space”.

When typical powder is ignited, this space became a buffer to defend the bullet against the sudden increase in pressure and regulate its speed.

According to specialists, shell cases were originally supposed to only be filled with “the right amount of the right kind of powder”.
And yet from my amateur judgement, what happens if I do not consider the air space or choose the type and amount of powder when reloading (reusing) the cartridge?

The worst case—catastrophic failurea misfire.

I had polished and polished my imaging power in order to build the revolver for no less than half a year.
Because of that, the strength of the image and the magic power that I put in was too much.

When making a new revolver, I should regulate the amount of magic power and the strength of my image, also determine the right amount of powder to put in.

From now on the time for trial and error and making notes begins.

Chapter 008 - Start of Battle

Lute, age 7.

When they turn 7, the quick kids leave the orphanage and began their apprenticeships as merchant apprentices, apprentice workers, or apprentice maids.

The kids that don't leave the orphanage earn money by doing simple work in town.
Per the rules, one part of their earned money goes to the orphanage, while the rest goes into their savings.

Those savings are intended to become their starting funds for when they leave the orphanage at 10 years old.
The savings are managed by the person themselves, to speed up the growth of their sense of independence and self-management.

When I turned 7, I also intended to work in town for the orphanage and my future, but I was stopped by Elle-sensei.

I had already contributed lots of money from reversi and other toys.
If on top of that I were to work it's possible that the other kids will lose motivation, thinking "wouldn't it be fine if we don't work and earn money as well".

Regarding my starting funds for when I leave the orphanage, Elle-sensei had been putting one part of the fees for the rights transfer of reversi and other toys to the orphanage as per the rules, and putting the rest into my savings.

It seems that since I had too much money for a 5 year old, Elle-sensei made an exception and looked after my funds.
When I turned 7, she handed it over to me so I could manage it myself.

At first I declined because I was embarrassed to receive back what I'd given away, but sensei forced it onto me, saying "because it's the rules".

If you ask what I really think, it's actually a godsend.
Recently, I had been wanting to have a box for storing cartridges and also a gun belt.

I bowed my head, said my thanks, and gratefully received the money.

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In this reincarnation world, there are about 360 days in 1 year, 30 days in a month.
12 months make 1 year. There are plusses or minuses depending on year, but that's basically it.
Furthermore, in the Fairy Human Continent I live in, there are four seasons cycling spring, summer, fall, and winter.
There are some points of difference but I don't handle heat well, so I'm thankful that it didn't have a tropical climate.

The hot summer had passed, it's the beginning of fall.
My schedule recently is: throughout the mornings helping with Elle-sensei's lessons as usual, and in the afternoon practicing with the revolver and making ammunition.

Snow has talent in magic so in the mornings she works part-time, and in the afternoon she joins magician's basic training.

"Lute-kun!"

On my way to the test firing range through the backyard, she waved at me with a smiling face.

The happiest thing that happened to me since I reincarnated is that I got such a cute childhood friend.

Snow unpleasantly stared at the revolver hanging from the gun belt wrapped around my waist

“Lute-kun is going to experiment on magic devices again today?”
“Experiments are mostly finished back in summer. Now it’s mostly practice”

After the misfire incident, she seemed to want me to stop with the magic device development.
She seems to want me to stop doing dangerous things.
But ever since that misfire incident I had been taking proper safety measures so there was never any problem again.
Yet Snow doesn’t agree and cutely pouted her lips.

I halfheartedly evaded her remarks.

“If you like, I can let you touch it. If you try shooting it you will definitely appreciate this magic device’s awesomeness.”
“It’s fine. I don’t want to touch such a dangerous toy. Lute-kun also, stop carelessly making strange toys”
“It’s okay already, that blunder won’t happen again. I’ve made it nice and safe, see.”

Snow put her hands on her hips and heaved a long sigh.

“Anyway, be careful okay. I’m fine since I have sensei next to me, but Lute-kun doesn’t. Don’t do anything reckless.”
“Yeah yeah, I get it. Well then, Snow too, do your best in class”

When she turned 7, Snow started calling herself “me” when others are around.
But when it’s just the two of us, she went back to calling herself by name.
…… but it’s cute so it’s fine.

Then Elle-sensei showed up. Looks like it’s time.

“Well then everyone, let’s begin magician’s basic lessons”
“See you later, Lute-kun. Take care.”
“See you later.”

My cute childhood friend saw me off.

Putting on a lustful look, I headed off to the test firing range alone.

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I walked from the orphanage backyard for 10 minutes and reached the riverside.

On the opposite side of the river there was the entrance to the forests.
Basically, children aren’t allowed to enter the forests alone.
Because monsters will come out.

Monsters like to eat children’s soft meat and internal organs.
But they rarely come outside the forests.
Around here there are almost no fierce monsters that come out of the forests and attack people.

I walked along the river without crossing over it.
Continuing 100 meters, I was at the test firing range.

On the side opposite the river.
I faced the steep cliffs about 30 meters in front and practiced my firing.
The ground is soft, to the extent that if you put your feet on the cliffs, dry earth will come crumbling down, so there’s no danger from ricocheting bullets.

As target, I drew human shapes using a stick of wood I found.
Even if it’s destroyed by rain or wind I can just draw it again.
When the water is not high, the river is not so deep, If I strengthened my body using body strengthening arts and picked a shallow spot, I can quickly

go to the opposite side and back.
I don't need to make sandbags thanks to the cliffs, with that I saved some labor.

I put my luggage in a corner.

I took out my "S&W M10" revolver from my custom-made gun belt wrapped around my waist.
As a safety measure, it was not loaded with any cartridges.

I reached out to a metal case I put in the corner.
This case is also made from the magic liquid metal.

The inside of the case was tightly packed with wooden boxes.
Opening the lid, there are 36 rounds of .38 Special9×29.5mmR bullets with the primers underneath, laid down in a grid of 6×6.

I took 6 rounds from a box and quickly loaded the M10's cylinder.out 6 bullets from a box, and quickly put them inside the cylinder.
I took out another 12 and put them in my left pocket.

I held the revolver and pointed the muzzle at a human-shaped target 30 meters away.
Thumbing back the hammerRaising the hammer, I took a stand up shooting pose, aimed at the head, and shot just one bullet.

"Kuu."

As I thought, the recoil jump of the smokeless gunpowder reproduced by magic power is fit for a 7 year old's body.

I took out magic power, faintly covered the necessary parts for the firing—legs, hands, shoulders, back, and used the help of body strengthening arts.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

I fired again and again, manually re-cocking the hammerraising the hammer after each shot.

I spent all the bullets remaining in the cylinder shooting at the target's head.
There was hardly any shock compared to before.
Also thanks to the body strengthening, I could suppress the recoil, and increase my accuracy.

I pushed out the empty cartridges out of the cylinder with the ejector rod, and quickly loaded the next set of bullets.

The aim is once again the target's head.
Next, without cocking the hammer for each shotraising the hammer separately each time, I pulled the trigger.
Sounds of firing was heard in succession.

Of course, compared to the first time around, the shot grouping was worsethe bullets were more scattered.

Once again, I quickly loaded the bullets.
Thanks to repeatedly practicing body strengthening arts, I became able to quickly reload the bullets.

I released body strengthening arts for a moment.

The next practice item was quick draw.

I returned the revolver to the gun belt, eased up my body and returned to a natural stance.

"————————fu!"

I instantly applied body strengthening while exhaling at the same time! This time I also poured magic power into my eyes.

My eyesight, reflex speed, and kinetic vision was strengthened.

I aimed at the human shape's head on the cliffside and fired.
Aiming true, the bullet pierced as if it were sucked in.

I released my body strengthening.
I returned the revolver to the gun belt.

Again, I continued practicing my quick draw until the bullets in the cylinder ran out.

Now that the bullets I brought had run out, I made ammunition.

I gathered the fallen empty cartridges.
Holding the empty cartridges, I soaked them in the magic liquid metal I brought.

The parts that compose the cartridge—size is 9×29.5mmR. I put magic inside the case part.
Magic power for the powder was released with the image of detonating, burning, exploding smokeless gunpowder, then it was compressed and solidified.

In addition, I made a bullet core as the cap.
As for the metal properties, I imagined lead.
I covered the faux-lead with a thin jacket.
I put in a primer at the bottom part with magic power to induce a small explosion, and finally I covered everything and the bullet is finished.

If the magic liquid metal runs out, there is still the remaining payment for reversi and other toys, so I can ask Malton the merchant to send me some more.
But because it is a rare item, I should scrimp and save where I could.
This is why I'm reusing the spent cartridges.

Making ammunition like this is surprisingly laborious and requires sensitivity.

If I do not build the image clearly, it would not make good cartridges.
The amount of magic power needed is not much but I can't put too much or too little.
If I don't picture the combustion image perfectly it won't have satisfactory power.

Troublesome as it is, but if I don't make it now, I can't make it at night in the orphanage later.

I certainly can't make cartridges around small kids.
If the worst case happens, it would be too late.

After finished making the last round, I ended by tidying up.

I soaked a towel in water, wrung it out, then wiped my sweat with it.
As I wiped my sweat clean from start to finish, I went on my way back, holding down my hungry stomach, while bathed in the light of the setting sun.

"Should I soon try using it in actual combat instead of just targets? I wanted to confirm how much power and effectiveness it has."

In order to do that it is necessary to ask Elle-sensei for permission to go inside the forest.
Because there are monsters in the forest.
They are suitable opponents for experiments.

However, I'm spinning my head over how to get sensei's permission.
Because of the misfire incident, Elle-sensei didn't really think kindly of my magic device development.

But combat practice dropped in in an unexpected form.

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A few days later—in the afternoon, close to nighttime.

As usual after revolver practice by the river, I finished making cartridges.

After making sure that there are no cartridges left inside the cylinder as a safety measure, I returned the gun to the gun belt.

I inserted the filled up wooden box into the metal ammo case snugly, and reached for the lid.

“Lute-kun!”

I look back to greet snow who came smilingly while waving her hands and going the river up.
I Think she came to inform me that dinner is done.

During that time the children of the town were playing in the riverbed behind Snow.

I also waved back.
I will finish tidying up before she arrives.

“Kyaaa!”

My hands that were tidying up were stopped by multiple screams.

I looked confused back to the children playing 100m upstream, screamed turned my back to the forest and started running.

Goblins are pouring out like an avalanche from the entrance of the forest.
15 of them.

They looked like hairless chimpanzees with big heads, wearing rags, and had faces 10 times more evil.
They are holding bows and arrows, axes, swords,spears, knives, shields in their hands.
Though they are 3 heads tall they are unexpectedly fast.

3 of them have already set foot in the river.

Monsters favorite food are childrens soft flesh. I think the excitement makes the speed of the goblins faster.
At this rate several children will be caught by them and will be victims before arriving at the orphanage.

“…..!”

I immediately support myself with the body strengthening technique.

I throw the lid of the wooden box up and load the cylinder with six shots.
I pour the rest in my pockets.

Preparations are finished and i strengthen my legs and start running.

A 3 or 4 year old girl falls down while escaping and hit her head.
The whole strength left her body in an instant.
Damn it, it seems she fainted.

Snow ran to the child and hid her behind her back.
It is possible for Snow to carry the fainted girl with the body strengthening technique and escape.
But, the goblins will catch up before the kids are starting to run.

She shielded the child with her hands, not budging an inch against the flood of goblins.

“Dance in my hands, sword of ice! Ice Sword!”

Together with her incantation two 1m long ice swords are born in each hand and fired.

Aiming true, the sword pierced two goblins in front of her. But just when she thrusted her sword, one goblin fired an arrow so as to not get hit by the Ice Sword.

A small chance after the incantation.

The arrow flies straight to her chest.

It will hit the child behind her if she evades.
There is still no technique to expand the resistance technique by reflex.

Through my strengthened vision i saw Snows despaired face.

For a moment it overlapped with the expression of my friend in my previous existence.
I shake that dark feeling off in order to shout.

“Snoooooow!”

Sink or swim, I held the revolver.
Shooting position.

Distance 15m.

I aim at the flying arrow.

I strengthen my kinetic vision, I practiced until now, the distance is shorter than usual— i will do it, i persuaded myself with it.

I predict the future position of the arrow and held my breath to restrain the shaking.
I raised the hammer, put my finger on the trigger, and quietly pressed.

BANG!

A firing sound what is unfamiliar in this different world.

I made no mistake in the bullets aim and break the arrow.

“Yosshaa!”

The acrobatic shooting that i’m not able to do again was successful and i raised involuntary a shout.
It goes without saying that was good luck.

The goblins legs stop at the appearance of my firing sound and are staying vigilant.
In the meantime, i strengthen my legs again to catch up to Snow and hide her behind my back.

“Lu, Lute-kun, t, tha—”
“Never mind the thanks, Snow you hold her close and absolutely don’t move from here!”
“O, okay!”

A wild animal will instinctively pursue the prey which turns on's back and tries to escape.
I want to avoid exciting the goblins a second time and assaulted by the goblins again.

I stop the conversation and point the muzzle at the goblins which legs had stopped.

I aim at the nearest goblin and fired.

Although it is a demon it is a living thing — But ,in order to protect Snow and the other girl I don't waver and pull the trigger.

The bullet pierces the head of the goblin.
The blood sprays not showy like in a movie or drama.
It only falls down like the threads of a doll were cut.

I cannot defeat the goblins with one shoot when i don't fire at the head with the power of the present revolver.

I slaughtered four goblins with the remaining bullets.

8 remained.

Regarding the goblins, it means that in an instant 5 of their comrades were killed.
Frenzied, they kicked up a splash and attacked once again.

"Ooooooooooooooooo!"

A roar with killing intent strikes my skin.

I frantically stopped my shaking body and moved my hands in a daze.
I ejected the empty cartridges from the cylinder using the ejector rod and quickly loaded the next set of bullets.
In order of priority, I aimed at the nearer goblins and the goblins with bows and arrows capable of long range attack.

First, I fired at the nearest goblin, who was holding a worn-out sword and a wooden shield.

The goblin promptly hid behind its shield, but it was no use.

Against a force that could pierce through car doors, a wooden shield is no obstacle.

The bullet easily pierced the shield, and shot the goblin in the head.

Their comrade defeated, the goblins instantly stopped moving. Capturing that scene, I pointed the muzzle at the next target.

“…..su-”

I took a small breath.

Next is the one aiming our way with a bow and arrow.

Thanks to my strengthened kinetic vision, the goblin’s movement looked like it was in slow motion.
But my own heart was beating quickly like mayflies buzzing in my ear.

Exhaling my breath and calming myself down, I fired the gun as practiced.

Before the goblin could shoot an arrow, I shot it between the eyebrows, it fell face-first into the water.

Like a precision machine, I proceeded to empty all my rounds on the goblins’ heads.

I shot all 6 rounds.
2 goblins remaining.

Becoming aware of their own numerical inferiority, the two turned their backs and scurried back into the forest.

I reloaded the cylinder with cartridges, just in case.

Only 2 rounds remain in my left pocket.

If there had been more than 8 goblins coming……

Examining the situation for a while, there are no signs of them returning with reinforcements.

I released my body strengthening arts, and heaved a deep sigh.

Though it should have been only 3 minutes since the battle started, my forehead was already covered in beads of sweat.
I felt tired, and not only because I used up more than half my magic power. There was also mental fatigue from experiencing my first battle.

I lowered the hammer, and turned around to check up on the state of Snow, who I had been covering for.

“Snow, are you injured? Does it hurt anywhere!”
“Lute-kun I’m scared! Lute-kun……!”

Snow clung to me while calling my name.

Because our heights are not that different, her head was buried on the back of my neck, it felt ticklish.

Despite being named Snow, her body was entirely soaked in warmth.

Seeing her safe, I felt more relieved than I’d imagine.

I lovingly caressed Snow’s head over and over again.

“Snow is admirable. Even when you’re scared, you stayed behind so everyone can get away…… you’re really great.”

In a life-threatening situation, she was able to do what I couldn’t do, and at 7 years old, at that.

I praised Snow from the bottom of my heart.
But while buried in my chest she shook her head, and holding back her tears she clearly said to me.

“Lute-kun too, thank you, you protected Snow and the kids. Thanks……”

Snow’s words of gratitude.

“……”

No matter how much I help her out, it doesn’t change what I did in my previous life, that sin will not disappear.
But hearing those words…… I felt the weight in the bottom of my heart lighten just a little bit.

“Me too…… thank you Snow.”

I embraced Snow tightly.
She’s warm.
She’s alive.
Having those feelings, she grasped my fingers. Her tears fell down my cheeks.

Afterwards, the kids that fled earlier sought Elle-sensei’s help, and she rushed over.

Until then, Snow and I kept on hugging, as if confirming each other’s warmth.

Chapter 009 - AK-47

Lute, age 7.

After repelling the goblins, Elle-sensei checked us for injuries.
There was only a cut on the little girl when she fainted, so with Elle-sensei's healing magic she recovered in the blink of an eye.

After that sensei led us back to the orphanage.

A party of guards were called from town to serve as lookouts.
During that time, Elle-sensei went inside the forest alone and killed the 2 goblins that ran away.
Moving easily around the forest, she looked for other monsters that might be a threat, then went back.
It seems she didn't find anything besides the goblins.

That night, a meeting was convened at the mayor's house.

The agenda was this evening's "Goblin Attack Incident".

There are cases where monsters individually attacked towns, but it's the first time they did so en masse.

To start with, ferocious monsters like goblins had never been found in these forests.
It's the first case ever since the town was founded.

A villager jokingly said "Isn't this the revival of a demon king?".
The mayor admonished him for indiscretion, and he went quiet.

On the bright side, through my and Snow's efforts there are no casualties, though some did get injured.
It was a rather fortunate outcome.

But we can't expect good luck to happen every time.
At the meeting it was decided that once every 30 days, the guard party and Elle-sensei would come together and look around the forest, patrolling to make sure there are no dangerous monsters.

Tonight, the guard party will take shifts standing watch on the outskirts of town just in case.

Everyone's words of thanks to me and Snow kept on coming until the next day.

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After the goblin attack incident, people's opinion of me underwent a complete change.

Originally among the townspeople I had gained a bad reputation—I was the creepy kid who, even though I became the orphanage's #1 contributor through my earnings from reversi and other toys, spent the money doing suspicious research with magic liquid metal.

As for myself, because I had immersed myself in handgun making, I never noticed that I had a bad reputation.

Through this incident, the public opinion of me became that of a "Genius who had no talent as a magician, but compensated for it with magic devices".

Really, a complete change…….

The mayor's complete change was particularly severe.

The girl that Snow and I saved was the mayor's daughter, and shewas taken at first sight by me.
Via the mayor, she pressed to have me as her husband.

The mayor also eagerly suggested that I marry her and stay and protect this town.

Of course, I declined.
I like this town, but protecting this town for the rest of my life is something I could not do.

Also, I was happy to be praised, but in terms of actual combat experience, there are a lot of points where I was lacking.

I could control my magic power as I wanted during practice, and yet control became sloppy in actual combat.
Because of that I spent magic power uselessly.

Also, I realized that the revolver's reload speed, number of rounds, and power are insufficient.

It turned out okay since the number of opponents was small, but if next time there is more of them, I don't think I'll be able to fully protect Snow and the others.
I still get cold sweat now when I think back on it.

Before the incident, the "S&W M10" was to be the prototype for a "S&W M19 Combat Magnum" chambered for the more potent .357 Magnum round.that could fire magnum bullets.
I woke up to the fact that now it's no longer a matter of pursuing a hobby.

I postponed the M19 temporarily, and decided to start working on an assault rifle.

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After finishing lunch, I returned to the boys' room.

It was in order to prepare the things I need for making an assault rifle at the test firing range.

Since the goblin attack incident, by the mayor's decree, kids are not to go to the river without adults.
But only I was allowed, for the sake of magic device experimenting.

Having a somewhat overprotective tendency, Elle-sensei made a sour face, but in the end, it was me who defeated the goblins so she gave her tacit consent.

Surely there is no way I was going to be making an assault rifle in the orphanage, even if Elle-sensei thinks it's inexcusable, everyday after finishing my chores I went to the test firing range.

Today too, I took out the cask containing magic liquid metal from the corner of the room.

The revolver for self-defense has also been loaded with ammo, and is hanging from my gun belt.
Just in case, I took a wooden box packed full of .38 Special9×29.5mmR bullets from the metal ammo case in one hand.

I put the wooden box on top of the cask, and went to the firing range through the orphanage backyard

On the way, as I was passing through the backyard, the students had already gathered for magician's basic class.

One of them, Snow, found me and came over, wagging her tail.

"Lute-kun!"

She clung to me without hesitation.
She made me drop the cask and wooden box in my hands.

“Snow! That was dangerous, didn’t I tell you not to cling to me so suddenly?”
“Okay, got it. I’ll be careful next time”
“That’s what you said yesterday…… hey, stop sniffing me. It tickles.”
“But Lute-kun’s smell is so good it made me feel calm.”

Not listening to my demands for self-control, Snow buried her face in my neck and sniffed.
Her dog ears, silky-smooth cheeks, and her breath felt really ticklish.

Snow is an abandoned child of the minority tribe called the White Wolf Tribe who lives in the North Continent.
As might be expected from a dog species, she seems to like sniffing smells.
Recently she had been clinging to me and sniffing like this.

I heaved a sigh of resignation, picked up the cask and wooden box, and patted Snow’s head rather roughly.

Far from showing signs of dislike, she seemed to feel good and smiled “Ehehehe”.

Snow’s attitude also changed drastically since the goblin attack incident.

Previously she was at the distance of a best childhood friend, sometimes to the level of “Huh, did she just fall for me?”.

But ever since the incident, she’s been actively showing favor like this.
Always eating together with me, following me around, never leaving my side whenever there’s time.
Of course, she gave up when I asked if she wants to follow me to the toilet.

The frequency of body contact also increased to an absurd degree.

She clings to me like just now, of course, but she also held my hands, linked arms, and when I was doing revolver maintenance in the boys’ room, she clung to my head from behind.
At those times she was sniffing me, of course.

Snow likes my scent too much—I only heard this from the girls in the girls' room, but she got her hands on one of my worn out shirts that can't be used anymore, and seems to have been smelling it to sleep ever since.
She complained that I was being noisy with the "ticklish" thing and wanted to do it no matter what.

When I persuaded her to stop sniffing my stuff at night, her face looked as if the world was going to end, her ears flopped closed, and her tail hung dejectedly.
Not wanting to see her like that, I compromised and said "sniff quietly so you don't bother anyone".
I'm being too sweet to Snow.

This is my own convenient guess, but Snow was originally unaware that she was holding favor towards me.
Then starting with the incident, she became aware of it.

Having this cute, good-natured childhood friend fall for me.
I was glad to have been reincarnated into this world.

If there are any problems, it's that……

"Lute-kun where are you going ?"
"To the test firing range, I want to experiment to see if I can make a new gun"
"Can I come along?"
"You obviously can't, right. Snow has to go to magician's basic classes now."
"Uuuu, that's right, but……"

If Snow stays with me, then she is simply getting her priorities backwards.
Just a little bit more and she'll turn into an idiot kid.

"I'll be at the test firing range until evening, so come over once you're done with classes."
"……. Okay. Once I'm there, can I shoot Lute-kun's revolver?"
"Of course. So do your lessons properly, 'kay?"

Snow took an interest in the revolver after the incident.

In order to dispel her fear of guns, I proactively taught her how to shoot. It was in order to protect herself at the time it would matter the most, like when she runs out of magic power.
I was planning on making a gun for Snow's own personal defense in the near future.

Elle-sensei showed up in the backyard.

"Well then everyone, now we shall begin magician's basic class"
"Look, Snow. Elle-sensei's starting class."
"A little more, I want to tickle you a little more."
"You can't be like that, everyone's waiting. See, go along."
"Uuuuu……. Lute-kun is mean."

She reluctantly let go of me while uttering complaints.

"Well, see you again then. Don't make trouble for Elle-sensei and the others."
"Okay, see you later."
"…… Snow-kun, your words and actions don't match. Let go of me."

Snow pinched the edge of my shirt in futile resistance.
Her face went timid when I pointed it out, but in the end she let go of her hands with a smile and ran back towards Elle-sensei.

I picked up the cask and went towards the test firing range.

I arrived at the test firing range.

I held my stuff, except for the cask, under my arms to keep them out of the way.

I opened the cask's lid, and put my hands in. I felt the cold touch of metal on my skin.
Relishing the cold feel, I once again thought of the gun I was going to make.

The gun I was going to make now was an “AK-47” assault rifle, a masterpiece created in the Soviet Union.
Though there are lots of improved variations like AKM, for now let’s just call it an AK-47 for convenience.

Why did I choose the AK-47 out of the many assault rifles? It’s because it had the simplest structure.

Moreover, it was, generally speaking, sturdy, being able to pound away perfectly in the freezing cold of the Arctic circle, the deserts of Africa, or the jungles of Southeast Asia, and even without going through maintenance after being soaked in muddy water.

Some even think that rusted and dirty AK-47s that had been buried in a wet rice field and dug out again after half a year can be fired without a problem. Such dirt and rust resistance, terrible firepower that can shoot 600 rounds per minute, a structure that made it hard to get jammed, and able to fire even when it hasn’t been maintained in decades, it was that kind of tough assault rifle.

Because of these advantages, in the world of my previous life, it was often copied and would pop up in all corners of the earth.
Appearing in national flags and banknotes of several countries, it was a weapon that redrew the geopolitical map of the world after the cold war, falling in to the hands of guerilla and anti-government forces around the world.

It is said that several hundreds of thousands of people each year lost their lives because of this weapon.
Because of that it was also called the “little WMD“.

That is the reason why I can say that this is the most appropriate assault rifle for this underdeveloped alternate world.

But there are two problems.

Number one: although the structure is simple, it’s still an automatic.

It uses what is called a gas-operated system, where the next round is loaded using the gas that is produced when the first round is fired.

In the case of the AK-47, it is done by using a gas piston located on top of the barrel.
This is called a gas-operated system.
Whether I can make something that works by this system or not…..

I learned this the hard way while making the revolver, but although I have the know-how, the difference between theory and practice is like heaven and earth.

Problem number two: the cartridges.

Rifle cartridges are very different in appearance and contents to handgun cartridges.

First, the outer shape of the cartridges is long and narrow, with a neck like a wine bottle along the way.

The powder inside the rifle bullets burn slower than that of handguns (although only by some 1000ths of a second).
Because the combustion speed is slower, the pressure in the airtight compartment inside the case and barrel increases, so it can fire bullets at a higher velocity and energy.

To reproduce such a powder, it is necessary to do extraordinary experiments.

“Well, I know the final form though. Since there is no need to do trial and error to get the answer, it’s still easy.”

The design of the bullet is way more complicated than the gun body itself.
It even raised heated discussions between ballistics experts.
Small changes in the bullets’ weight, shape of the tip, and powder quantity will make them into entirely different weapons.
“…… If I could make it, it seems it’s going to be a reliable weapon.”

I exhaled lightly once again, and closed my eyes.
I used the power of imagination I cultivated while making the revolver to the utmost.

“The first part I should make is ……”

I gently put my hands into the cold liquid metal.

Chapter 010 - Confession

Lute, age 8.

An afternoon I spent rather relaxedly, after the summer's climax has passed. I was carrying my luggage while going to visit the test firing range.

I dropped the luggage at the riverside.

The cask of magic liquid metal, the metal ammo case.
The assault rifle, AK-47.

2 kinds of wooden boxes are contained in the metal case.
One contains .38 Special for the revolver that I hang on my waist.
The .38 special (9×29.5mmR) box is bigger than the exclusive AK47 7.62mm russian short-circuit(experimental bullets)

Thanks to spending most time on the AK 47, it is mostly completed and i'm on the final stage.

The appearance is black while the stock(the part applied to the shoulder at the very back of the gun) is no longer the downward-angled solid wooden stock typical for this weapon, but a skeletal metal in-line stock.

It is necessary to match the gun barrel with the height of the eyes to aim accurately while shooting with the AK 47. But if the stock is not in-line with the barrel (or even if it's straight, it is at an extreme angle) it is hard to point the muzzle straight, so the muzzle jumps up from the recoil. During sustained full-auto fire, the cumilative effects of recoil can quickly force the muzzle off-target, something that is exacerbated with a non in-line stock. In just a few shots in full-auto, the weapon becomes an anti-aircraft gun.

So to minimize the jumps because of recoil, with the AKM as a reference I lowered the barrel from eye-height to shoulder-height, used an in-line stock, and added further minor adjustments (basically, I arranged the barrel and stock in a straight line).

Also, I reproduced the internal structure precisely, and implemented the automatic system.

After firing, one part of the discharged gas enters through the gas port (an opening for gas to enter, as the bullet is fired and advances near the muzzle the inside of the barrel between the bullet and the cartridge becomes an airtight compartment, and because of the high pressure a part of the gas therein enters through the gas port) and pushes a gas piston inside the gas cylinder backwards, pushes back the turn bolt (the part that touches the bullet) and bolt carrier (the part that supports the bolt), and raises the hammer.
The bolt carrier that was pushed back is restored by the recoil spring, and the next round is pushed from the banana magazine to the chamber (because the bolt is pushed no less than 1 cartridge length backwards, enough space is created and the next round is pushed up into it).
At the end of all the hard work, when the gas operated system ran smoothly, I yelled out in excitement.
The other thing that I want to compliment myself on is the included switch that goes between “safety”, “full automatic”, and “semi automatic” modes.

When the safety selector is set to on, the selector lever blocks the trigger so it couldn’t be moved.

In semi-automatic mode, the selector lever doesn’t do anything.
When the trigger is pulled, the hammer is released, but its movement is hindered by getting stuck on a certain disconnector hook (a part directly connected to the trigger). In that situation, the hook won’t come loose unless the trigger is temporarily released to its original position.

Lastly, in full-automatic mode, the selector lever holds down the disconnector.
With the hook being held down, the hammer will not get caught.
Because of that, the hammer will continue to move in a reciprocating motion until the trigger is released.

Furthermore, I also added a rate reducer for when using the full-automatic mode.
Thanks to this rate reducer, there is a gap between shots when rapid firing, increasing the effectiveness by making it easier to aim even when the gunner is less experienced.

It had the appearance of a metal object, but it was made from just magic liquid metal, like the revolver, so it's lighter than one would imagine.

Though my mental age is no less than 30, my body is that of an 8 year old. When holding the AK-47 (prototype) I look like some middle-eastern child soldier.

If I were to think of making an assault rifle other than an AK-47, it would have been an impossible task.
In the world of my previous life it could be made even in countries with low technology, that is precisely why it could be made in this alternate world.

But it's still not complete.
The problem is of course the ammunition.
Though I started making it by trial and error simultaneously while making the actual gun, it is still far from satisfactory.

For now, because of the gas operated system the empty cartridges are ejected.
That too is because it's an AK-47.
The piston operates without causing misfires or jams (because the combination of parts had room to spare) even when shooting cheap non-brand-name cartridges or cartridges whose powder had deteriorated from moisture.

But there's no way I can be satisfied with that.
In order to perfectly display its power, I spent time looking for the optimal distribution.

The thickness of the cartridge, the burning impression in the amount of powder, the properties of the bullet core, et cetera—all of these are still incomplete.

Because I had completed the actual gun recently, I had mostly been conducting development on the cartridges.

I took out a wooden box with a label on the lid from the metal case.
Each box was filled with experimental bullets improved using the results of the test firings.
I took out 1 box, and filled the banana magazine with it.

I slid the fire selector off “Safe” and into “Semi-Auto”
I rocked in the magazine, and pulled the charging handle, loading the first round into the chamber.
I increased my physical abilities with body strengthening arts.
I pointed the muzzle towards the humanoid targets on the cliffside.

BANG!

It fired.

“Ku—!”

An empty cartridge danced in the air.
Though I only shot 1 round, my shoulder endured a strong thrusting recoil.

Its power, recoil, and gunpowder combustion noise…. could not be compared to the “S&W M10” revolver.

While checking the remaining sensation in my hands, I switched to full-automatic mode.
Restoring my motivation, I rapid-fired.

BANG! BABABABABABABABABANG!

The noise was loud, but I also had trouble keeping the muzzle on-target.
I unintentionally increased the magic power for body strengthening arts.

I shot all bullets and my whole body feels numb.

Mmm after all this is no good. The combustion speed is still too fast.

The result of that is somehow—a bullet hole was unraveled at the target 30 meters away.

Among assault rifles, the AK-47 is not particularly accurate (even so, for a 100m distance it is concentrated in a circle 20cm in diameter.)
But even considering that, this is not a very good result.

I jotted down my detailed thoughts on the experimental bullets, and put them in the wooden box.
Of course, I also collected the fallen cartridges and put them back in their wooden box.

Next, I took the next box, and stuffed the cartridges into the magazine.

Exhausting all the boxes (except the spares) like this, I left behind my detailed impressions.

Once I finished shooting all the experimental bullets I prepared, I next started revolver practice.

I won't make experimental bullets for the AK-47 here now.
I'm going to be making them tomorrow.
I'll be making them while comparing with my notes in one hand.

The reason why I don't make them right away—If I don't take my time and concentrate, I can't create the improved experimental bullets the way I noted down in my memo. That will take up an entire afternoon.

If I can finish the AK-47 soon, I wouldn't be using the revolver so often anymore.
But since I don't know when that will happen, I kept on practicing.
It is better to have lots of things I can do in order to live in this world.

I smoothly put 6 cartridges inside the cylinder, and shot standing.
Next I practiced quick drawing with the gun holstered in my gun belt.

I used up all but two handgun bullet boxes like this.

I gathered up the fallen cartridges for making new bullets.

This is my daily life as an 8 year old.
Morning, helping Elle-sensei with lessons.
Afternoon, test firing experimental AK-47 bullets or making them. Then revolver practice—something like that.

Around the time I finished making .38 Special ammo, Snow came up to the test firing range.

“Lute-kun, sorry to make you wait!”
“Didn’t I tell you already, it’s dangerous if you suddenly cling to me like that. Also stop sniffing me. I reek of sweat, right?”
“Not at all! You smell really nice! *sniff sniff*”
“Stop sniffing already, it tickles”
“Ehehehe, sorry”

Before I knew it, it had become our usual conversation.
I breathed a sigh of resignation, and patted Snow’s head.
She closed her eyes in happiness, and wagged her white tail.

Snow is now 8 years old.

In order to save up money to enter a magic school soon, she had started doing part time work since the middle of last year.
For example, making magic stones.

Magic stones are stones that can store magic power.

Infusing magic power into it while picturing fire regularly for about 30 days makes a magic stone with fire attribute.

Picturing water makes one with water attribute.
Picturing lightning makes one with lightning attribute.
Picturing wind makes one with wind attribute—that way you can make magic stones with various uses.

If a fire magic stone runs out of magic power, it can be recharged by once again picturing fire while infusing it with magic power regularly for 30 days.
You can think of it as a magic power battery.

Attribute magic stones, and recharged magic stones (lower price than attribute magic stones) can be sold to merchants specializing in magic devices at a high price.
Part of that money goes to the orphanage, the rest goes into her savings.

The year after next, the savings are meant to be used for enrollment fees for the magic school she wants to enter.

In the afternoons was, as usual, magician's practice.
After practice, Snow comes over to the test firing range and practiced shooting the revolver with me.

The remaining 2 boxes of ammo was for Snow.

This is Snow's daily life nowadays.
Morning, part time work infusing magic in magic stones.
Afternoon, magician's practice, revolver practice—something like that.

Snow was already at the same level as me when it comes to revolver reloading, quick draw, and firing precision.

She also has talent as a magician.
According to Elle-sensei, who teaches magician's basic classes, Snow has very good memory.
She unmistakably has aptitude to be a B+ rank magician to begin with.

Rather than jealousy, the feelings of wanting to congratulate her were overwhelmingly stronger when I heard that.

Because Snow is my closest childhood friend, I felt happy for her being praised as if it was intended for myself.

Also, her physical growth recently is amazing.

When she clung to me I felt C-cup breasts through her shirt.
She is also still in the middle of growing, this time next year I am sure she will have gone over D cup.

To the point where I am worried about where my eyes are pointing.

Perhaps because she was one of the white wolf tribe of the northern continent, she was weak in summer.
Because of that her clothes were rough.
Pure white skin yet healthy buttocks, smooth sides without even 1 strand of

hair growing from it, a small navel slightly moistened with sweat, and springy breasts peek out from underneath her shirt!
I stole glances at her without her noticing many times over!

I realized that my body became hot from Snow clinging on to me.

The desire to not only pat her head, but also to touch every corner of her tender body became stronger in me.

But she was still 8 years old.
My own body is the same age as her, but there is a 35 year old adult inside.
I don't intend to lose to my desires and hurt my precious childhood friend.

Yes lolita! No ecchi! I am a gentleman so I absolutely won't do anything that would hurt Snow! …… I surely won't! I probably won't.

Strengthening my reason, I called out to her to get some distance.

"W, well then, let's start practice. Hey, Snow let go."
"I want to hug harder, just a little more."
"Afuu~!"

She put more strength into her arms.

The feeling of Snow's breasts became stronger.
Her hips, inversely, drew back.
I cursed this young 8 year old body.

I started becoming horny.

I want to push her down right now and do this and that—but I came to my senses and resisted the feelings that were about to explode.

We're still 8 years old, it's still too early no matter what anyone thinks, the stimulus was too strong.

I pulled myself apart from Snow while feeling regret for separating from the feeling of those breasts from the bottom of my heart.

“Th, that should be enough, no? If we cling like this any further we’ll have no time for practice”
“Lute-kun is stingy.”
“Yeah yeah, stingy is fine. Here, the gunbelt. Put the cylinder in yourself.”

I handed the gunbelt and revolver over to Snow.

She fastened the belt and held the revolver with experienced hands.

She pushed the cylinder out, and took 6 9×29.5mmR rounds from a wooden box.

Raising her body abilities with body strengthening, she fired at the human shapes on the cliffs.

We began practice.

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When it became evening I finished cleaning up

While Snow goes besides the river bank she asks.

Lute-kun what will you do when you become 10.

In this world there is no concept of birthday; if one becomes 15 they will generally be treated as an adult.

10-year’s old is an important time to decide one’s career.
Children of the upper classes are different, but the common folk children become merchants’ apprentices, craftsmen’s students, etc. or enroll in school if the house has the leisure to do so.

Inside the orphanage including Snow and me there are 4 persons at the same age
Snow is going to enter a magic school.
The two girls who are Snow's friends wish to be maid apprentices and took up a recruitment letter from the town's bulletin board.
They sent a letter and are waiting for a answer.

In this situation only I'm unable to chose a career.

Probably, she is worried as a childhood friend.

"As I thought, you're going to Malton-san's place and run a toy store?"
"No, that's not it."

In reality, the discussion comes repeatedly whether or not to learn how to become a merchant from Malton, but I refuse it entirely.

If I don't have a goal, I think using the knowledge of my previous life and selling toys wouldn't be bad.
But I had already decided on a lifestyle.

I didn't intend to keep it a secret, but I haven't told this to Snow or Elle-sensei.

This is a good chance so I'll tell her.
I wanted Snow to know.

"I was thinking of going on a journey when I turn 10. Then… If I can, I want to help people in trouble or in need of help."
"Why do you want to do that?"

Atonement for the acquaintance that was cornered to suicide in my previous life… of course I can't say that.
It hurts to lie, but this is what I said.

"Last year I helped Snow right? That time, I felt that helping others is something worth doing."
"If that's so, then Snow will go on a journey with Lute-kun!"

I thought Snow would say something like that.
I gave her the lines that I've prepared for this.

"Snow will go to school when you turn 10, right? Then you will become a splendid magician and go to the north continent to look for your parents, that was your dream, right?"
"If I'm with Lute-kun, I can go to the north continent the way I am now."

Certainly, if Snow holds an AK-47, her fighting power would be doubled.
It wouldn't be difficult to face ordinary monsters and enemies.

But Snow has talent to become a magician.
Furthermore, Elle-sensei acknowledged that she'll "certainly become B+ rank".
If by any chance before that….

I don't intend to crush that talent of hers.

I let out my honest feelings to Snow.

"I would be happy to be together with Snow. But, Snow has talent to become a magician. I don't want to be with Snow so much as to eat away Snow's talent. I don't want to become a burden for Snow."
"Lute-kun……"

Snow wiped her rising tears with her finger.

She stopped her legs and released her hands, then turned around to face me.

Miraculously, that place is exactly where I saved her from goblins.

Snow's skin became red down to her neck, and not just because of the setting sun's light.
Her eyes are not filled with sadness, but with hot emotions.
Snow clasped her hands together on her chest, mustering courage, she spoke out.

"There is something…… I've always wanted to tell Lute-kun."

At the riverside where the sun sets.

A trembling, red-faced childhood friend, staring straight ahead.

I'm not a thick-headed protagonist of some manga or light novel, I'm already aware of Snow's feelings.
The reason I didn't say anything is because she's still an 8 year old child.
But now, it seems like that Snow is going to let out her feelings.

8 years after I was born.
If you add the memories of my previous life, 35 years.

This is the first time a girl confessed to me.

Of course, the answer had already been decided. It's 'Yes!'.

With the setting sun at her back, Snow mustered her courage with all her might.
Putting in her whole feelings, she exclaimed loudly.

"Snow…… Please make Snow into Lute-kun's 'sex slave!'."
"——Huuuwwwwhhhaaaattttt!!!?"

Receiving the most unexpected of unexpected proposals, I unintentionally let out a yell that didn't lose to Snow's.

Snow's idiot kid levels had sped up faster than I'd imagined.

Chapter 011 Snow – Part 1

I—— Snow, am an abandoned child of the rare White Wolf Race who live in the North Continent.

Around the time I was 1 year old, I was left before the orphanage that Elle-sensei manages.

The name “Snow” was sewn into the clothes I was wearing.
Probably the parents who threw me away sewed it.

And a child of the human race of the same age was thrown away too.

His name is Lute.

At First, in regards to Lute-kun, I didn’t like him much.

Lute was a strange child, around the time we were 3 years old, while we played with the onee-sans in the childs room, he took Elle-sensei’s classes at his own convenience.

He sat in the back of the classroom and received the lessons more quietly than any of the other students.

Furthermore he had an interest in magic and also came to participate in the basic magic classes.
However Lute-kun does not have talent as a magician.

Elle-sensei already told that to Lute-kun.
At the time, he was supposed to have said “I will look for a way other than magic”, but he still took part in magic lessons.

According to Elle-sensei, there seems to be kids who still spend great effort even though they understand that they had no talent as magicians.
Such obstinacy was especially common for boys.
Among them there are kids that couldn't accept reality, got their hands on dangerous magic tools and lost their lives, said Elle-sensei.

I understand Lute-kun's feelings, but it's dangerous to use magic as a human with a low amount of magic.

Magic power is the spirit that's left over after being used to maintain one's body and mind.

In the worst case scenario you would die if you use up more magic power than that surplus.

But the other party is still 3 years old.
An age where he won't understand even when persuaded.
Therefore Elle-sensei did not drive him out and consented to his participation in the class.

However a problem occurred immediately.
Lute-kun learned how to use magic by watching the others do it and imitating them.

Lute-kun who had no talent in magic immediately ran out of magic and fainted.
Elle-sensei, whose face changed to panic, rushed over.
Once Lute-kun, who was put to sleep in the child's room, woke up, I told him the situation and to be careful.

"That is a no-no! Lute-kun is making trouble for Sensei!"
"Sorry, sorry. I'll be careful next time."

Lute-kun was not sorry at all and took part in the lesson again.

And at the next lesson.

Lute-kun faints again after using magic.
This time he was bleeding from the head, choked on vomit and fainted.
He would have died if sensei didn't notice and ran over.

The gentle Elle-sensei flew into a rage because of this accident.
She forbade Lute-kun from participating in basic magic classes.

After forbidding participation in the lessons, Elle-sensei came with hanging rabbit ears to me and asked how Lute-kun's doing.

Did Lute-kun do anything strange because he was forbidden from taking part in classes? She asked.

It seems that every once in a while there are kids that, when pressed down by their elders, become gloomy, lose their ambition, and became apathetic.

Sensei is worried that he would become like that because of this incident.

When I answered "he's not different from usual", she breathed a sigh of relief.

At this time, even as a child I immediately understood that Elle-sensei was troubled because of Lute-kun.
It looks like until now Sensei had been looking after many troublesome children.

Every once in a while, there would be some kids that don't have any common sense, but Lute-kun stood out even among them.
At that time, Sensei grumbled to me, "If I were to speak badly of him I'd call him 'abnormal'", she said as if letting the words slip from her mouth.

So at that time I disliked Lute-kun.

Lute-kun who troubled Elle-sensei, who gathered and raised us without asking anything in return, like a mother.
Lute-kun who caused trouble for everyone, but pushes forward like a child.

The baby that was left behind on the same day as him—and just because of that became the one in charge of looking after Lute-kun, the one at Lute-kun's side, was me.

Although I go and complain occasionally.
But I thought this everyday life would continue forever.

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Lute-kun and I, age 4.

In the orphanage, once you turn 4 your job is look after the 2-3 year olds in the children's room.

And yet Lute-kun did nothing at all, and only slept in a corner of the room.

I was incited to pay attention to Lute-kun by the two 4-year olds who were looking after the kids with me.
I had to pay attention because I was the closest childhood friend to Lute-kun, they said.

I resented that, even though I was still the one in charge of looking after Lute-kun.

On top of that, I unconsciously wished that something bad would happen to Lute-kun, who was always causing trouble for Elle-sensei and everyone at the orphanage.

"Lute-kun, you'll get scolded if you don't properly take care of the little kids with us!"
"I want to help you all very much but the way you did it is so good that I didn't get a turn. That's why I was sitting in a corner so that I won't get in the way."
"If that's the case, then you can help playing house. We have roles enough for the four of us."

“Playing house?”
“If Lute-kun does not play, I will tell sensei that you skipped work.”
“I didn’t really mean to skip work but…. all right! Let’s play together.”

He obediently did as ordered once I said sensei’s name.
I softly murmured, “so you’ll listen if I mention Elle-sensei, hmph”.

“So which role should I take? The father, or maybe the husband?”
“Lute-kun will be the pet pink slime!”
“Is that really necessary…?”

With a surprised face Lute-kun asked back.
I insisted that a pet was necessary and that day I had him play the role as pet until we were finished playing house.

If with this he would reflect a little and start looking after the younger ones…….

“If any of you manage to defeat me in a game, I will keep the role of pet.”

Once again, Lute-kun behaves as if he doesn’t intend to help, he pressed his demand to play a self-made game he called “reversi”.

I thought he had been sneakily doing something these few days, to turn out to be making a game….
But the rules of this toy, the so called reversi, were very simple and it seemed very interesting.
Therefore we got on board with Lute-kun’s proposal.

Even if the toy was his own making, there were 3 of us.
I simply expected that at least one of us can win.

I was the first to challenge him.

In the opening Lute-kun’s black piece were changed to white in a good mood successfully.
He deliberately put his black pieces so I can easily turn them all over.

I didn’t notice that this was a trap, I felt overjoyed and joked around.

“Lute-kun is we~ak! Even though it’s a game you made yourself.”
“Hahaha. Snow, make it funnier if you are going to tell a joke. Snow still can’t do addition and subtraction, how can I lose in this game of intellect?”

Looking down on me with sarcastic remarks.

But the surface of the board is almost white and there is no more than a few black pieces left.
I judged that he was a sore loser.

“Muuu… I have a feeling I’m being made fun of… Fine! If Lute-kun loses, he has to listen to another order besides being a golden marumaru!”
“As you wish… But if I win, I’ll touch your fluffy dog ears and tail to my hearts content!”
“It’s not dog ears! …It’s wolf ears! Because Snow is from White Wolf tribe!”
“I know… and don’t forget the promise.”

Lute-kun answers lightly while placing a black piece at the edge.

huh?

The white carpet was cut diagonally by toppling the pieces over and the black ones formed a line.

I looked for a way to deal with the rapidly changing situation, but there was no way to change the color of the edge pieces!

This was Lute-kun’s aim from the start!

As I belatedly realized his aim, he put on a smile like a hunter whose prey was caught in a trap.

I hate him, I hate him, I hate him!

Mortified, I looked for a trick to reverse the situation, but he had gained control of the edges, I was at my wits’ end and lost.

“Uuuu… I lost…”
“Yeah, I won! Don’t forget the promise, okay?”

“I know… I’ll let you touch it when we’re about to sleep at night…”
“O-ok.”

Lute-kun’s triumphant face is suddenly turned red and he turned away.

Since his face got red I got worried about his condition.

“What’s the matter, Lute-kun? Your face is red. Did you catch a cold?”
“N-no it’s nothing. So… who’s the next opponent?”

He turned towards the other two, as if to say “I’m not interested in an opponent I already beat.”

Muu… and I was worried about you.

He happily plays Reversi with the other girls without noticing me sulking.

(*I know that it’s more fun to play with the other girls rather than playing with me who was always unkind. But you’re being too obvious!*)

Without noticing me getting angry, Lute-kun continued playing reversi with the other two while talking excitedly.

(*As I thought, I hate Lute-kun. I HATE him!*).

In the end not even one of us was able to beat Lute-kun.
We borrowed reversi to practice, determined to “defeat Lute-kun!”

That evening, right before bed, Lute-kun came to rub my tail and ears.

Several days later, the “defeat Lute-kun!” plan was easily abandoned.

Because no matter how much we practice, none of us could even corner him.

We can hope for a close game, but there is just no way to get a solid hit, so it can't be helped.
For that reason, we settled with the conclusion that it would be more fun to play among ourselves, whose skills are more balanced.

It seems Lute-kun was fine with it.
When we finished taking care of the children we played reversi and Lute-kun continued to sit in a corner of the room with closed eyes.

Because Lute-kun took care of heavy labor such as clearing up the futons the other 2 stopped complaining.

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Lute-kun and I, age 5.

Once you reach the age of 5 you start having lessons for reading and writing, arithmetics, history, and common knowledge.

We 5~6 year old children studied in the biggest room in the orphanage where desks had been lined up.

But only Lute-kun was special.

He has finished all his studies at the age of 3.
Therefore he became Elle-sensei's class assistant.

His work is mainly to prepare teaching materials, warn children who were noisy, and look after children who fall behind in their studies.

The child who is behind in her studies… …is me.

"The plate on the left has 5 loaves of bread, the plate on the right has 12 loaves. So all of them together, how many loaves are there?"
"Err, Uhm… …"

I bent my fingers and counted.

“Fi, fifteen?”
“Wrong. The answer is 17.”
“Uu～”

I unintentionally fell flat on the desk.
Though I’m good at learning to read and write, history, and common knowledge, no matter what I do I was weak at arithmetics.

I stumbled at the first thing, addition.
Other kids my age had already learned subtraction.

Lute-kun was teaching me today as well.

He patiently accompanied me, who was always unkind to him, without even seeming annoyed.

He kindly, gently, cheered me up when I made a mistake in arithmetics.

“Don’t worry! I’ll be with Snow until you can do addition. But since it’s Snow, you will be able to do it soon!”
“Really?”
“It’s a promise… so cheer up! So… I’ll bring out the next question… The plate on the left has 3 loaves of bread, the plate on the right has 5. So, all of them together how many loaves of bread are there?」”
“Uhh, uhh… 8!”
“Correct! Snow is a genius! Excellent, excellent!”
“Ehehehe.”

It was only a simple arithmetic problem but he was delighted and praised me as if it was his own accomplishment.

At first I thought he was a selfish child who troubled Elle-sensei——but nowadays I don’t dislike him.

I had come to notice that I was able to look at him without prejudice.

Lute-kun is surely clever.
His curiosity and his drive are higher than others.
Unskillful but intelligent, full of curiosity, and having energy to spare, he puts whatever interests him into practice.

Kids like us could not be so proactive, but he was.
Because of that he was misunderstood by the people around him.

Weird child, odd child, unchildlike—they say.

Perhaps there is no one in the world who could understand Lute-kun except me, the childhood friend.

I decided in my heart “I, at least, will be kind to him”.

Lute kun who is only interested in himself does not notice my sympathy, he innocently continued the arithmetic lessons.

Well then, I’ll bring out the next question.
Yeah! I’ll do my best so I can do addition properly!

He again pats my head delightedly.
The feeling of his hand was so pleasant it became a habit.

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At that time, “I hate Lute-kun who always troubles Elle-sensei” had turned into the prideful pity of “He’s my childhood comrade who was cast out by his parents like me, so I should take good care of him”.

Moreover, I embraced my childhood love of Lute-kun shortly afterwards.

The cause for that was the day Lute-kun and I were going together to gather firewood——

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“Lute-kun you came at the right time. I was just going to call you.”

Sensei called us out from behind, stopping us.

“What can I do for you, Elle-sensei?”
“Actually, there is someone who came and wanted to see Lute-kun. Can you come to the reception office?”
“Umm… is it my parents who abandoned me? Or… a relative came to pick me up?”
「……ッ」
“……fu”

Elle-sensei fell silent, as if her face had been slapped all of a sudden.
I guessed from sensei’s attitude.
The one who Lute-kun wants to meet the most didn’t come to pick him up.

Sensei opens her mouth apologetically.

“Lute-kun, I didn’t mean that the person who came are your parents or relatives. I’m sorry for putting in a strange way like that and making it a misunderstanding.”
“It’s ok. I was only curious when I heard it. I dont think i particularly wanted to meet my parents now.”
“……”

I look down unintentionally.
That was because I couldn’t look at Lute-kun’s firm behavior.

Lute-kun and I were children who were left in front of the orphanage.
All orphans should want to see their parents. Elle-sensei often said so.
And yet, he did not cast off his confident attitude, conversely, Elle-sensei became worried for him.

Having that possibility pass in front of him, I hazily recalled.

…… could it be that he really doesn't want to see his father and mother?

I want to meet them!
I want to meet them and want to know the reason why I was cast away.

If I can I want to live with my parents.
And yet he, who was supposed to be in the same situation as me, declared "I don't want to see my parents after all this time".

Does he have that much of a grudge against the parents who cast him away?
But since I never heard of any grudge out of his mouth, that thought never crossed my mind.

Is it strange to want to meet mother and father who threw me away? Am I being strange?

While I was thinking that, the insides of my head spun around in circles.

"——Snow-chan can you go and help the other children?"
"Ok, sensei."

I reply to Elle-sensei and went to the children who were cleaning the rooms.

Without wondering who called out to Lute-kun, I only kept on thinking of myself.

That night.

Late at night, after Elle-sensei had gone to sleep, I went and trespassed into the boys' room.

By the rules of the orphanage boys and girls are not allowed to go to each others' rooms at night
It was one of the most serious crimes, if you break it you won't get a meal for a day.

But even though it was a dangerous crime to commit, I just had to ask Lute-kun. That was what I believed.

I looked for Lute-kun in the darkness of the boys' room.

Luckily I'm from the white wolf clan who could see well in the darkness.
I found Lute-kun immediately.

Lute-kun, Lute-kun
"*yawn*"

Because he didn't wake up even when I raised my voice, I slapped his cheeks and shook his shoulders strongly.
After I called to him and shook him several times, Lute-kun finally opened his eyes.

"n…gaah!?"
"Shhh!!! Don't be loud. Everyone will wake up."

In surprise I clasped his mouth in a hurry.

Lute-kun did not seem to get the situation at first and he was confused, after several seconds he made some decision and he furrowed his eyebrows.
I approach him further and confirm that he completely regained consciousness.

"Everybody will wake up, be quiet please? Okay?"
nod nod

As Lute-kun nods i slowly part my hands from his mouth.

"Uhm, Snow, your feelings are—"
"Shhhh!!! Everybody will wake up if we talk here. Follow me."

I dragged Lute-kun out of his futon and took him out of the boys room.

Our destination is underneath the window in the dining hall.

Here shines starlight through the window and i can read detailed facial expressions.

It's warm here during the day but at night it feels a little chilly.
We brought our shoulders together to get each other warm.
There is also the advantage that he can easily hear even if I talk in a low voice .

Lute-kun asked in a slightly angry voice. His eyes are serious.

"So, what is the reason why you broke the rule and brought me here?"
Un… you see… there is something that I really wanted to ask you….

Certainly its late at night and I forcibly woke him up and took him out but he doesn't need to have such an angry look…

But even if I'm afraid there is no other method.
I explained the reason why I took him out.

Um… did Lute-kun ever think of meeting with your mother or father?
"…Eh!?"
"Like I said, do you want to meet the mother and father who abandoned you?"

He asked me back, looking dumbfounded.

"Snow, why are you asking me this?"
"…Today, Lute-kun told sensei 'it's not like I want to meet with them after all this time', right?
Snow wants to meet mom and dad. When we meet, Snow will ask them why they abandoned Snow away. And Snow wants to live with mom and dad… Is Snow weird for thinking like this?"

Lute-kun listened to my story in silence.
Then he changed his pose from hugging his knees to a cross-legged sitting position.

“Snow, come over here.”
“Why?”
“Just do it already.”

He made me sit on his lap a little bit forcibly.
Lute-kun embraces my head gently and holds my ears against his chest.

“Can you hear the sound of my heart?”
“…Yes, I can hear. It goes dokun, dokun, dokun….”
“People get relieved hearing the sound of heartbeats. This is because, as babies, we are raised hearing our mother’s heartbeats.”

Oddly I curled up my body in a fetal position..
I closed my eyes and leaned my body against Lute-kun.

“Wanting to meet your parents is not weird. So, there’s no reason to feel worried.”
“Really?”
“Uh-huh, it’s true. The reason why I never thought of meeting my parents is because I have no way of looking for them.”

Lute-kun starts talking in a tone like telling someone younger than him.

“Just one clue: I have a star-shaped birthmark on the back of my right shoulder; I can’t just show this to everyone I meet and ask them. Besides, I have no talent as a magician; it’s hard to think that the parents who casted me out would come back and pick me up. So, it’s clear that I will never meet with my parents again for as long as I live.”

I gasp on Lute-kuns words.

“But Snow is different. Unlike me, Snow has talent as a magician. Besides, the White Wolf race is a minority that lives in the snowy mountains of the North Continent. If you go north you might find some clues there. Even so, forgive me for saying ‘after all this time I never thought of meeting my parents’ so insensitively, ‘kay?”

He apologizes from the bottom of his heart.
But I understood. The one who had to apologize was me.

I'm an abandoned child from a minor clan, the so called White Wolf Clan from the North Continent.
If I go to a town of the white wolf clan or head to a village, my parents may be there.
There ought to be important clues, even if only a little.

Furthermore I have talent as a magician.

If I become a magician beyond B- I will not be troubled about employment and have no troubles with money.
On the contrary Lute-kun has insufficient clues and no talent as a magician.
If you become 10 years old you graduate from the orphanage and leave to work. Only staying alive is hard.

It does not mean Lute-kun doesn't want to meet his parents.
He understands that it is all but impossible to meet his parents the way he is now and gave up.

And yet in my own selfish anxiety, I dug up the emotional scar that he had come to terms with.

My chest feels like it had been hit because of my own foolishness.

"…Snow is also sorry. Snow asked such an insensitive question without thinking of Lute-kun's feelings."
"There's no reason for you to apologize. I was the one in the wrong, you see."

I was the one who's wrong, but he still smiled and forgave me for my sake.

"If that's the case, then Snow and Lute-kun are both in the wrong. So it's a tie."
"That's right. It's a tie."
"As an apology, Snow will tell Snow's dream only to Lute-kun…."

My dream, the one I secretly held and had not told anyone, not even Elle-sensei.

“You see, when Snow is bigger, Snow will become a magician. Then, Snow will go to the north continent to look for father and mother. Once Snow finds those two, Snow will ask why they abandoned Snow away. If we could make peace, then the three of us will live together in the same house… This is Snow’s dream.”
“It’s a good dream. If it’s you, then it will absolutely come true….”

Lute-kun took a breath,

“…But if you couldn’t find them or you couldn’t make peace with them, Snow still has me, Elle-sensei and the kids at the orphanage. Don’t forget that okay?”
“…Un, thanks Lute-kun.”

Until the end, I became tearful for him, who was worried for me.

I felt the feeling of his and my heartbeats overlap, as if becoming one, and my chest became warm inside.

“Is it okay to hear the sound of Lute-kun’s chest a little bit more?”
“Uh-huh, you can listen all you like.”

I strengthened my arms and pressed my ear to his chest.

Lute-kun smiled wryly, and gently stroked my head, like a father or an older brother.

I loosened all the muscles in my arms and legs and let him spoil me with all my heart.

At that time I noticed a small light spark inside my chest.

When I get bigger I’ll become a splendid magician, and take Lute-kun on a journey to see his mom and dad. Then once I found my mom and dad, I’ll start an orphanage like Elle-sensei. Then we all can live together, me doing the management like Elle-sensei, and Lute-kun teaching the kids reading, writing, and arithmetics… If everyone can get along and stay together, that would be so wonderful.

In Lute-kun's warm arms, I drew up a new dream.

I undeservedly thought to take care of this childhood friend, whom the adults and other children would not be able to understand.

——Releasing my ear from his chest, we each went back to our rooms.

When we parted ways, Lute-kun asked me.

"Should we sleep together tonight, after all?"
"Lute-kun is ecchi～～."

Boys sure say ecchi things right away!

We finally had a good mood going, too——I thought as I angrily returned to the girls' room.

"… but that was a bit of a shame, wasn't it?"

My face flares up hot and not aware of it, my tail shakes.

I slip into my futon In a hurry so that I'm not noticed by everyone.

The next day, I found out that Lute-kun had sold the rights to reversi and other toys to a merchant and earned a huge amount of money.

Chapter 012 - Snow – Part 2

Lute-kun had sold the rights to reversi and other toys to Malton-san the merchant and was in a daze, having bought some magic device called "magic liquid metal" from him.

Magic liquid metal——We had been taught in our lessons that it was an item gained after defeating monsters called metal slimes.

Magic liquid metal is metal with a trace of magic power, and it had the properties of taking shape of the image when touching it while imagining armor in one's head.

On top of having limited use and being hard to handle, it seems it was expensive for being a magic device.

It was something synonymous with the term "unpopular item".
He bought that kind of thing for a lot of money.

The world's opinion of Lute-kun further fell——from "strange kid" to "creepy kid".

Not even noticing that people around him were taking their distance, he gleefully took the magic liquid metal and continuously experimented, saying "not like this", "not like that".

Unskillful but intelligent, full of curiosity, and having lots of energy he put whatever interests him into practice. He was just as I previously thought.

I don't understand what he's doing, but…… I thought, "As his only childhood friend, I should look after him".

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Lute-kun and I, age 6.

This year I came to somewhat understand what Lute-kun was making.

I saw him making something that looks like a “metal tube with a handle?”, and when I asked him about it, he cheerfully explained.

Lute-kun says that it’s a magic device called a “gun”.

He had gone and developed his own original magic device!
Of course, I was amazed, and my head became dizzy.

Certainly, Lute-kun did make toys that everyone enjoys.

But toys and magic devices are two entirely different things.

Even if they made a house out of toy blocks, there is no one that would think that they made a real castle all by themselves.

To make an original magic device, he would need high-grade materials, magic knowledge, lots of money, and plenty of time.

There are lots of stories of magicians destroying themselves, and countries depleting their treasuries in order to develop a magic device, and yet…
Lute-kun who was smarter than me should have known this.

People’s opinion of him changed from “creepy kid” to “pitiful kid who does not have talent for magic but could not face the reality”.

Lute-kun himself was puzzled that “recently, the aunties helping out at the orphanage had been strangely kind, giving me sweets and all”, he didn’t notice at all.

Thickheaded as always, he continued on with the development of magic devices without noticing his surroundings.

The part when the “gun” that Lute-kun made caused a problem, was at the beginning of summer.

Early Summer.

The day when the sun’s rays start becoming harsh.

I was weak against the hot sun because of my racial traits.
I was idling away in the afternoon in the shade of the girls’ room after having finished all my work.

The other girls were playing reversi or having a chat…….
It was a sight I was so used to seeing.
I was falling into a doze, and started to close my eyes.

KABOOOM!

Just when I was going to fall asleep, I heard a sound like a bolt of thunder.
The sleepiness vanished as if it had been a lie.

“Wha, what was that loud noise just now! Hii……!?”

And then, Elle-sensei’s shriek.
All of us heard the sound and ran to the backyard, Elle-sensei rushed over to the crouching Lute-kun.

「……ッ！？」
“……gu!?”

We all gasped.

Lute-kun was holding his hand in pain, but there was a smile on his face.

It was a very mismatched scene, with blood all over his face.
The kids who were weak of heart started crying, even fainting on the spot.

The wreck of the magic device that was the source of the sound was still emitting a faint smoke.

“Everyone, don’t come! The older kids please take the young ones inside!”

Sensei had noticed us, and gave out her instructions.

Everyone immediately obeyed, and the older kids took the younger ones back inside the orphanage.

I wanted to stay there because I was worried for Lute-kun, but an older girl forcibly took my hand and led me back inside.

That night.

There was a little bit of time before bed, the topic of discussion in the girls’ room was all about Lute-kun.

It seems that the cause of the incident was magic power running amok in the middle of magic device development.

Lute-kun’s injuries were no problem thanks to Elle-sensei’s healing magic. And as punishment for the uproar this time, he was sentenced to a 30 day ban on experiments and doing punishment work.

Ignoring what the other girls say, I recalled the words Sensei once said.

“There are those who still spend great effort even though they understand that they have no talent as magicians. Especially boys, among them there are those who do not accept reality, and get their hands on dangerous magic devices, then lose their lives”

Maybe Lute-kun is one of those people.

If that's the case, then as a childhood friend, I had to put him back on the right path!

With the misdirected worry "for Lute-kun's sake!", I vowed to make Lute-kun into a good and honest person.

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Lute-kun and I, age 7.

The hot summer had passed, it's the beginning of fall.

Ever since I turned 7, I had been joining the magician's basic classes that Elle-sensei opens in the afternoons.

At the beginning, rather than magic practice, it was harsh weight training, running to build up strength, hand-to-hand fighting, and swordplay.
But after half a year had passed, we got used to it and became able to handle it easily.

Today after lunch, we gather in the backyard of the orphanage to move our bodies.
The ones taking the class were 2 first years, 1 second year, and me as the only half-year, for a total of 4.

All are girls, they received sensei's lessons happily.

One day before the beginning of class, I looked outside the window.
I noticed a person who carried luggage come out of the backyard.

“Lute-kun!”

When I called out to him and waved my hand he stopped.

Lute-kun was wearing a hard leather belt with the magic device he made himself, hanging from its right hand side.
In his hands he holds a little barrel and on top of it is a box made of metal.

When the children of the orphanage become 7 they leave for the city to do simple work.
One part of that money goes to the orphanage and the remaining will be put aside for the future.

Originally, Lute-kun was also supposed to go out to work nowadays, but he alone was stopped from working by Elle-sensei.

When Lute-kun was 5 years old, he had sold the rights to “reversi” and other toys and gained a considerable sum of money and donated it to the orphanage.
The reason Lute-kun was prohibited from working was because if he earns any more money the other kids are going to lose their motivation.

So in the mornings he would help Elle-sensei with classes, and in the afternoons he would do experiments with that dangerous magic device by the river.

I reflexively scowled at the magic device hanging from his waist.

“Lute-kun is going to experiment on magic devices again today?”
“Experiments were mostly finished back in summer. Now it’s mostly practice.”

Ever since the magic device explosion incident, I had been coming over to him to say that I wanted him to stop with the magic device experiments, but he evaded the issue and continued.

I had thought of throwing away his magic device without him noticing several times, but….

I didn't do it because there is an orphanage rule saying "Other people's belongings are not to be tampered with or thrown away".

I was so worried about him, but he just laughed nonchalantly…

"If you like, I can let you touch it. If you try shooting it you will definitely appreciate this magic device's awesomeness."
"It's fine. I don't want to touch such a dangerous toy. Lute-kun also, stop carelessly making strange toys."
"It's okay already, that blunder won't happen again. I've made it nice and safe, see."

…. without understanding people's feelings….

"Anyway, be careful okay. I'm fine since I have sensei next to me, but Lute-kun doesn't. Don't do anything reckless."
"Yeah yeah, I get it. Well then, Snow too, do your best in class"

With just the right timing, Sensei showed up and called out to everyone.

"Well then everyone, let's begin magician's basic lessons"
"See you later, Lute-kun. Take care."
"See you later."

Once again Lute-kun walked towards the riverside.

I saw him off, looking at his back with an uneasy expression.

But my worries and Lute-kun's bad reputation were completely changed when he solved an incident.

That incident was……

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Afternoon of that day, evening.

Because preparations for dinner were finished I went to call Lute-kun.

He was at the so called test firing range, after leaving the backyard of the orphanage and walking 10 minutes along the riverbed you would locate that spot 100m downstream.

At the riverbed were several children of the town playing in the water.

“Its already late, you should soon go home.”
“Yeah!”

They answered energetically but the children showed no signs of going home.
After calling out to Lute-kun I decided in my heart that I would speak to him again.

“Lute-kun!”

I called out to him as he was just tidying up and waved my hand.

He raised his hand with a smile and returned to tidying up.
So that he doesn’t let me wait he moves his hand faster than previously.

“Kyaaa!”
“!?”

I was surprised at the scream from behind me and looked back, the children who played at the riverbed started running away immediately.

On the other side of the river goblins were overflowing out of the forest entrance like an avalanche!
15 of them.

That’s! I have never heard about goblins in the forest!

But the reality was before my eyes.
Its real even if I deny that fact.
I start to forcibly rearrange my confused thoughts.

The goblins are faster than imagined. At this rate they will catch up with some children. However I'm a magician apprentice, I have to protect Lute-kun and the children.

I used my magic power to near the limit at the afternoon magic classes, but since I rested, it recovered fairly well.
Until Elle-sensei comes I need to hold out.

The first fight to kill each other—— it would be a lie if I would say I was not scared, but more than that I have the strength to protect them all and a sense of duty rises up in me.

While I resolved myself, one of the children fell down in the escape and didn't move anymore.

In a hurry I rushed over to her.

No external wounds except the bruise from falling down. There was faint breathing too.

There was no problem.
Since there is no time for treating her, I cover her behind my back.

I spread out both arms and concentrate magic power in my palms.

Dance in my hands, sword of ice! Ice Sword!

In both hands appeared a one meter ice sword, conjured through magic.
It`s a attack magic of the ice magic system.

I threw it at the two closest goblins who were coming near me.

The ice sword with the speed of a gale pierces into a goblin who wears tattered armour and holds a knife.

The other one stabbed into a goblin who was preparing to shoot an arrow—but the ice sword just missed the moment when the arrow was let loose.

"…… ah"

The arrow flies straight at my chest.
At that moment I couldn't even blink—

It will pierce the child behind me if I dodge. After half a year's training I'm not able to raise a resistance formation in an instant.

I thought in an instant. Together with the arrow, death approaches.

I was careless.
As I myself can kill the opponent, the opponent can kill me too.
Goblins aren't targets for practice.

——I don't want to die! I don't want to die! I really don't want to die!

I cried desperately in my mind.

However the arrow flies straight at my chest as it was connected by a thread.

"Snoooooooow!"

Even now, Lute-kun's voice sounded far away, as if from the other side of the clouds—

Bang!

引き延ばされた意識を割る、聞き慣れない破裂音。

Simultaneously the arrow which flew at me was shattered in the middle and was scattered to the day after tomorrow.

“Yoshaa!”

I saw how Lute-kun raised his fist and shouted in joy.

As they heard the shout and the explosive sound, the assault of the oncoming goblins stopped.

As I was released from the danger of death, my hips grew weak and I sat down on the spot.
In that interval Lute-kun came running over to face off against the goblins to protect me.

I was about to tell gratitude towards his back but,

“Lu, Lute-kun, t, tha——”
“Never mind the thanks, Snow you hold her close and absolutely don’t move from here!”
“O, okay!”

According to his instructions, I held the fainted child close in order to protect her.

Lute-kun turned the magic tool that caused the explosion towards the goblins.

Once again, the magic device made the explosive sound like when it broke the arrow.

Simultaneously in the nearest goblin’s head was a small hole.
The goblin fell like a puppet whose strings were cut, in the river.

Lute-kun let the explosive sound resound again 4 times.

In an instant 4 goblins had a similar hole in the head and collapsed.

8 remained.

But the goblins still had an overwhelming advantage in numbers.
Frenzied, they kicked up a splash and attacked once again.

‘OOOOOOOOOOoooooooooooooooo!’

A roar with killing intent strikes my skin.

“Hiii……”

I let a little scream out only I could hear.

And yet Lute-kun just like a veteran hero calmly fumbled with his magic tool —— And pointed the magic tool again at the flood of goblins.

In a stance like a sculpture, he calmly killed the goblins in an instant.

A goblin holding a wooden shield hid behind his shield, but the magic device Lute-kun invented made a hole in his head as if the shield wasn’t there.

In about 6 seconds from the 8 goblins at the start, 2 remained.

The two understood their unfavorable situation and turned their back and flew at full speed to the woods.

Lute-kun tampered again with the magic device and carefully watched the goblins flee to the entrance to the forest.

I wonder how much time had passed.
…… it doesn’t seem like the goblins will be coming back.

As the strength left Lute-kuns shoulder he hurriedly turned around.

“Snow are you injured? Does it hurt anywhere!”

Without even a shred of his earlier veteran hero-like battle presence, there was only my childhood friend, worrying about me.

That was the Lute-kun I knew well.

“Lute-kun I’m scared! Lute-kun……!”

I put the fainted child gently on the ground and instinctively clung to Lute-kun.

Because our height isn't different, I buried my face in his neck.

Lute-kun didn't mind becoming dirty from my tears and gently stroked my head many, many times.

I can really calm down in Lute-kun's arms.
Like the night of that day, I listened to the beating of his warmth, and the fear for my life and first battle—all the negative emotions melted away like the snow in spring.

aah, so is it ——

thump, with my feet on the ground, I was convinced.

The thing that I, who was thrown away, always wanted. The place I must return to…… it's into Lute-kun's arms.

When I realized, my body became hot.
My whole self yelled:
"The reason I was born into this world was to meet——with him."

This is the feeling of 'falling in love'.

With maddening desire boiling up, I muttered that inside of my heart.

"Snow is admirable. Even when you're scared, you stayed behind so everyone can get away…… you're really great."

Lute-kun comforted me, who was only holding him back.
My chest was sweetly strangled by his kindness until it hurts.
I can't just stay silent.

"Lute-kun too, thank you, you protected Snow and the kids. Thanks……"

We said our thanks to each other.

For some reason Lute-kun put on a smile as if getting a little bit of peace of mind.

Afterwards, the kids that fled earlier sought Elle-sensei's help, and she rushed over—until then, Snow and I kept on hugging, as if confirming each other's warmth.

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After the goblin attack incident, people's opinion of Lute-kun totally changed.

Until now, he was the "poor kid who didn't have talent in magic, but couldn't face reality", but because of this incident, it changed to "genius who didn't have talent in magic, but compensated for it with magic devices".

Not even minding such opinions from people, Lute-kun made a difficult face and started making a new magic device.

I unintentionally smiled faintly at his usual carefree attitude.

And then, Lute-kun and I turned 8.

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An afternoon I spent rather relaxedly, after the summer's climax has passed.

After magician's basic class had ended, I hurriedly ran to the test firing range.

My beloved childhood friend was putting his hands in a small cask, he was in the middle of making some cartridges.

Without holding back, I clung to his back.

“Lute-kun, sorry to make you wait!”
“Didn’t I tell you already, it’s dangerous if you suddenly cling to me like that. Also stop sniffing me. I reek of sweat, right?”
“Not at all! You smell really nice! *sniff sniff*”
“Stop sniffing already, it tickles.”
“Ehehehe, sorry.”

Before I know it, it had become our usual conversation.

Lute-kun breathed a sigh of resignation, and gently patted my head.
His hand felt really good, and before I realized, my tail was already happily wagging left and right.

Again and again, Lute-kun’s expression changed back and forth between wanting to hug me close, and not hugging me close.

Finally, as if shaking something off, he gripped my shoulders and pushed me off.

“W, well then, let’s start practice. Hey, Snow, let go”
“I want to hug harder, just a little more.”
“Afuu~!”

I put strength into my arms, and Lute-kun made a weird sound.

“Th, that should be enough, no? If we cling like this any further we’ll have no time for practice.”
“Lute-kun is stingy.”
“Yeah yeah, stingy is fine. Here, the gunbelt. Put the cylinder in yourself.”

He bluntly handed me the gunbelt wrapped around his waist.

“It was on him until just now, so it should be smelling of fresh sweat, but of course, sniffing would be rude”, I thought as I received it.

While chanting in my heart “patience, patience”, I skillfully wrapped it around myself.

After the goblin incident, I also started practicing how to handle the magic device Lute-kun made.

He accepted, saying that I can use it for self-defense when I run out of magic power.

I took the revolver, and pushed the cylinder out.
I took some 9×29.5mmR bullets from the remaining wooden boxes, and put them in.
Raising my body abilities with body strengthening, I fired at the human shapes on the cliffs.

Practice Start.

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As the evening falls we finished tidying up and went back to the orphanage hand in hand.

Just now I stole a glance at Lute-kun’s face that was illuminated by the setting sun.

All the children in the orphanage have to leave when they turn 10, no exceptions.

As for me, I plan on enrolling into a magic school.

Lute-kun and I are both 8 years old.
It’s an age where we should soon think of our careers.

I wonder what Lute-kun plans to do….

Every once in a while, he looks far away much unlike someone his age.

What Lute-kun is thinking, what he is going to do, not even I, the closest childhood friend to him, knows.

So I sometimes become afraid.

Surely Lute-kun is going to accomplish something.
Maybe something even the 5 great race heroes couldn't do, I think he's going to do something amazing like that.

The fact that he could make a magic device stronger than magic at 7 years old is proof above all.

For an ordinary person like me, it's hard to be at his side, I suppose.
Even though my feelings of "I like him" "I love him" won't lose to anyone.

If we leave the orphanage as we are now, the connection between Lute-kun and I will end just like this.
After that, I don't think we're ever going to cross paths again—even though I'm supposed to return to his arms.

As I thought that, my body became cold, as if being suddenly thrown naked to some snowy mountain.

I want to stay at his side.
In whatever way possible.

If I can be selfish, I want to connect Lute-kun's blood with the next generation in my belly.
I want to bear his child.
Seeking the strongest bonds over all relations, that's the instinct of a white wolf.

I'm surely going to love that child more than myself.

“Lute-kun what will you do when you become 10?”

I resolved myself and asked him about his plans after graduation.

“As I thought, you’re going to Malton-san’s place to run a toy store?”
“No, that’s not it.”

Lute-kun said that without wavering.

“I was thinking of going on a journey when I turn 10. Then… If I can, I want to help people in trouble or in need of help.”
“Why do you want to do that?”

Receiving an unexpected answer, I reflexively asked again.

He hesitated—then opened his mouth to talk.

“Last year I helped Snow right? That time, I felt that helping others is something worth doing.”
“If that’s so, then Snow will go on a journey with Lute-kun!”
“Snow will go to school when you turn 10, right? Then you will become a splendid magician and go to the north continent to look for your parents, that was your dream, right?”
“If I’m with Lute-kun, I can go to the north continent the way I am now.”

It doesn’t matter if I don’t enter a magic school, as long as I can be with my beloved Lute-kun.

But hearing my remarks, Lute-kun made a very sad face.

“I would be happy to be together with Snow. But, Snow has talent to become a magician. I don’t want to be with Snow so much as to eat away Snow’s talent. I don’t want to become a burden for Snow.”

“Lute-kun……”

It’s sad, but what he said was right.

No matter how much I say I love him, I don't want to eat away at his talent, I don't want to be holding him back. Just staying together with him against his will, that wouldn't mean anything.

"I like him" "I love him"—just that feeling alone doesn't allow me to stay by his side.

Of course I had to become stronger, at least so I don't become a burden. Because of that, I have no choice but to go to a magic school.

But if I separate from Lute-kun just like that....

Once again I was struck by fear.

The fear of being separated from Lute-kun just as childhood friends, and not being able to meet him again.

I don't want that! I want to always be with Lute-kun!

I wiped my rising tears with my finger.
I stopped my feet and released my hands, then turned around to face Lute-kun.

Miraculously, that place is exactly where I was attacked by goblins, and where he saved me.

I summoned my courage, and told him the feelings I always wanted to say.

I clasped my hands on my chest, mustered courage and raised my voice.

"There is something…… I've always wanted to tell Lute-kun."

He probably had guessed, and faced me with a serious look.

I mustered my courage with all my might, putting all my feelings as it is, and shouted.

“Snow…… Please make Snow into Lute-kun’s “sex slave”!”

“——Huuuwwwwhhhaaaattttt!!!?”

Chapter 013 - Bracelet

Lute, age 8.

“Snow…… Please make Snow into Lute-kun’s “sex slave”!”

Idiot Snow made a most unexpected remark, I was dumbfounded.

Holding back a painful expression, I pressed her for an answer.

“S, Snow, do you understand what “sex slave” means? Actually, where did you even learn that word?”
“Of course I understand. Some of the merchants that I work making magic stones for also handle slaves, I heard that from them. “Sex slaves” will absolutely stay by their masters’ side. Because I want to always be by Lute-kun’s side, I want to be a “sex slave”!”

Oi, merchant. What the hell are you teaching an 8 year old kid…….. Does this world have no concept of decency or sexual harassment?

As I cursed the merchant for teaching Snow strange things, I asked her.

“I’m happy about Snow’s feelings, but we’re still 8 years old, special relationships like “sex slaves” are a bit……. Aren’t there more ordinary choices, like lovers or married couples?”
“Lovers… married couples…”

Snow frowned and hung her head, but immediately raised it back up and made a firm smile.

“…… It’s fine, I already understood. I’m not a suitable person for Lute-kun. But I’ll be happy just staying by Lute-kun’s side. So, so, don’t worry about me!”
“Sorry, I don’t get what you mean. Why is Snow not a suitable person for me?”

“Well, Lute-kun is a genius who can make a magic device more amazing than magic at 7 years old, right? From the beginning, I never thought of becoming lovers or couples with someone amazing like that….”

I can finally get a glimpse of Snow’s thoughts.

Somehow the me in her mind is an unimaginably amazing person.

There’s no way that kind of person will love her.
But conflictingly, she wanted to stay by his side.
Therefore she came to the conclusion to be a “sex slave” instead of lovers or spouses.

Well, I was spoiled by Snow’s courtesy, since I didn’t properly tell her my feelings.

I ran away from telling her my feelings using excuses like, “because she’s an 8 year old kid” or “because she has choices”.

It’s my own misunderstanding, but I was afraid of being dumped.

Because of that, I even waited until she confesses to me.

If it’s like that —— then I won’t get hurt.

I understand well the reason why the amount of years I spent without a girlfriend equals my age in my previous life.
Even though I should have sworn to not run away from hardship ever again, but once I noticed, I had run from what was in front of me and took the easy path.

In order to wipe away Snow’s uneasiness, I decided to summon courage from within.

I put the small cask on the ground and opened the lid.
I put my hands in the remaining magic liquid metal and raised the image.

A pair of bracelets were made in my hands.

The bracelets were merely black loops, without any decorations.
Because I didn't have time, this was the limit of what I can do.

I held the bracelets in hand, and once again faced Snow.

"Snow."
"Y, yes!"

Her eyes were rooted on the bracelets in my hand.

There were legends about the 5 great heroes that saved this world.

One of them is: the night before facing the demon king of the Fairy Human Continent together, the Human Hero gifted a bracelet to the Fairy Hero as his lover.

The hero proposed to marry her once they defeated the demon king and returned.

From then on, this world developed a custom of gifting the partner with a bracelet when marrying. Then, the act of wearing a bracelet had come to mean that one had a marriage partner or someone they plan to marry.

Speaking in terms of my previous world, it's a wedding ring.

With the bracelets in hand, I proposed to Snow for marriage.

"We're still 8 years old, but, I like Snow, I love Snow. I don't want to give Snow to anyone. So…… will you marry me?"
"Y……yes. Me too…… I love Lute-kun very much. I love you."

She made a smile, and from her large eyes, pearly drops of tears came falling down.

I took Snow's slender left arm and put the bracelet on.

Snow, too, took my arm and put the bracelet on.

Then with the setting sun as our witness, Snow and I exchanged our first kisses.

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“Snow-chan and Lute-kun are getting married!?”

After dinner that night, we asked Elle-sensei for some time and reported our engagement.

The two of us sat beside each other in the orphanage reception office, in front of Sensei.

Snow was clinging on to my arm the whole time we were in the room. Her tail was wagging so much, I was worried that it might get torn off.

“Looking at the two of you, I felt that it would happen “someday”, but marrying at 8 years old…….”

Elle-sensei was confused, she couldn’t believe what had happened.

There are no age limits on marriage in this world.
But even so, getting married at 8 years old is very early.

“Of course, since we’re only 8 year old kids, this is not meant to be an official marriage. We still have no way of living together, too. So after all, these bracelets are just for our engagement. I intend to formally buy Snow a proper bracelet once she graduates magic school. At that time, we will be around 15, which is just about the right age.”

It’s usual for nobles of this world to engage in political marriages.
For that reason their children would wear simple bracelets on their left arms as proof of the engagement.
Then at the time of marriage, it is exchanged for a new bracelet (a splendid one, inlaid with gems).

Common people generally don't use engagement bracelets, they just simply finish with marriage bracelets.
But if they're reasonably affluent, there is a custom of seeing their children off with engagement bracelets.

In my case, since there is magic liquid metal as material, I can use a pair of self-made ones.

"I see. Sensei is surprised, you see. I thought, 8 year olds couldn't possibly be getting married."
"……. Though the bracelets Lute-kun made are good enough as wedding bracelets for me."
"Snow, I'm happy you think that way, but these are things made on the spot, after all. I'll get you proper bracelets when we turn 15, so I'd like you to wait until then."
"Un, okay. If it's Lute-kun saying it, I'll listen and I'll wait however many years."

Snow laughed "nihera", seemingly happy from the bottom of her heart.

Sensei smiled faintly and asked.

"Then once Lute-kun turns 10, do you intend to go together with Snow?"

There is a large city near the magic school.

Sensei seems to think that I "intend to live there waiting for Snow to graduate", while working.

"No, until she graduates I am going to go on a journey."
"Journey is it…? Why is that again?"

I told Sensei the same reason I told Snow.

Listening to my story, Sensei clasped her hands on her chest.

"You want to help people in need with your magic device, is it…?…. if so, how about becoming an adventurer through the Adventurers' Guild and starting a Legion?"

“Legion?”
“Yes, do you know about adventurers?”

Adventurers are one of the jobs in this world.

One can become an adventurer by registering with the Adventurers’ Guild.

They cover a lot of jobs—like monster extermination, bounty hunting, or ruin exploration.
In other words, jacks of all trades.

“If you become an adventurer and fulfill the requirements, you can receive the rights to start a Legion from the Adventurers’ Guild. Among Legions, there are ones advertising specialties like “Won’t defeat anything but dragons”, “Won’t accept members other than noble magicians higher than B rank”, “Only accepts female adventurers as members”. Therefore if you become an adventurer and make a Legion and declare the objective of saving people in trouble, you can save more people compared to just going on a journey alone. If you make a name for yourself, people seeking assistance will directly come to you.”

After listening to Sensei’s explanation, I put my hand on my chin.

Certainly, starting a Legion seems to have many benefits.
By making, organizing, my own Legion—my own army, and taking action, I can save lots of people. This world is a dangerous place, so rather than moving alone, mobilizing a number of people is a lot safer.
Then, once Snow graduates from magic school, I’ll have her enter the army, and we can be together forever. Developing stronger weapons, I can protect Snow.

Un, making my own army is not a bad thing.

“If you’re interested, Sensei’s twin younger sister work as an adventurer, I can write her a letter of introduction. Learning the basics of adventuring under her sounds good, no?”
“So Sensei has a younger sister. I never knew.”
“This is the first time I heard of it too.”
“She’s not a magician, but she’s a good girl, with a kind personality and full of adventurous spirit. She had a bit of a failure involving money when she

was younger, but……I'm sure that she got over it when she grew up. In the old days, she used to take Sensei, who was always playing inside, along outside."

Sensei delightedly talked about her sister.

If it's under Sensei's younger sister, she'll be my teacher for learning the ABCs of being an adventurer, I can't think of anything more with that personnel.

"I think I'll become an adventurer and start my own Legion. So would you please write your sister a letter of introduction?"
"All right, then I'll hand it to you when Snow-chan goes to magic school."

Snow and I bowed our heads and said "thank you very much."

Sensei changed the topic, and warned us with a red face.

"Congratulations on your engagement, but, you two are still 8. Your bodies still have a lot of growing to do, so never, ever, uh, err…… don't do *that* kind of thing. On that point, rather than Snow-chan it's Lute-kun who should be careful."
"Y, yes, understood. I'll be careful."
"?"

Only Snow tilted her head in puzzlement.

"Other than that, though you two are engaged, please keep it within bounds in front of the other kids. Just do things in moderation. Because it's bad for their education."
"Understood."
"And another thing—"
"There's still more!?"
"Of course. Listen well, Lute-kun. Since you're now engaged to Snow-chan, from now on please refrain from stealing glances at other kids' breasts or bottoms. Polygamy is a common thing, but please don't do it so casually."

I asked back with a serious expression.

“……Not at all, Sensei. I don’t understand what you’re talking about at all.”
“It’s useless to try and trick me with that serious face. Lute-kun’s ecchi eyes are already exposed.”
“Particularly this year. I think he does it to me on purpose.”
“Even if Lute-kun acts like a gentlemen on the surface, girls are especially sensitive to boys’ gazes. Please fix your ecchi personality just a little bit, okay.”

Elle-sensei scolded me, stretching one finger.

Uooooooo! That can’t be, my stealing glances were exposed!?

I reflexively became perplexed.

“Then finally, Lute-kun, Snow-chan, the two of you, please be happy.”

Elle-sensei said her honest congratulations.

We answered “yes” in unison.

Chapter 014 - Setting Off

Lute, age 9.

The middle of summer—kids from the orphanage, townspeople and merchants coming and going, were gathered at the town entrance.

We were seeing off Snow, who was going to magic school.

Besides her, a young girl from town decided to go work in the town near the magic school.
The two of them were hitching a ride on a merchant's horse cart who was headed for that town.
Of course, they paid a suitable compensation.

Travelling to their destination town takes about 3 months by horse cart.

Also, the magic school was located in the north of the Fairy Human Continent (the continent where the main inhabitants are Humans and Fairies. The orphanage is also in the Fairy Human Continent.)
So there is a lot of snow piled up.
The reason they set off in summer, is in order to arrive at the magic school before snow falls for real.

"Lute-kun, are you sure you won't come to the magician school with me? There is an Adventurers' Guild at the town near the magic school, I will support us both by earning our living expenses."
"Support huh…… I don't want to be a dependent."

While feeling shocked, I stroked Snow's head that was buried in my chest.

This year my body height had grown considerably, the difference to Snow's had started to appear.

“Once I leave town and things calm down, I’ll write you a letter, if I have leisure time I’ll also come to see you. Snow should study to become a magician properly.”
“……. I’ll write letters too, I’ll make time and come visit. Absolutely.”
“Yeah, let’s look forward to that time.”
“Let me sniff you for the last time, because after this I can’t sniff you again for some time.”

Without my acknowledgement, Snow sniffed me in front of people.

Because of company, I soon peeled her off me.

“Doing that in front of people is embarrassing, so stop it.”
“Au, Lute-kun is mean.”
“You can consider this an apology, but here’s a present from me.”

From the bag I brought, I took out a handgun and holster for Snow’s exclusive use, and handed them over.

“It’s smaller than Lute-kun’s revolver?”

It’s a “S&W M10” revolver with a shorter 2-inch barrel, in a silver finish

The holder the revolver hangs from is brown leather.
It was a custom-made article, a “shoulder holster” that hangs from the shoulder, not the type that hangs from the waist.

It was not well suited for quick draws, but in Snow’s case it was for her self-protection after all.
Even when she can use attack magic, the gun is convenient because it doesn’t require a spell, and can work in tight spaces.
So for her self-defense, I chose the “shoulder holster” type that was better concealed.

Also, recently Snow’s breasts had grown again.

The highlight factor when big-breasted women use “shoulder holsters” is higher.
So because of my own tastes I made that choice as a result.

“Even though the range and accuracy is lower because of the short barrel, it’s more convenient to carry, no? But in the end, it’s for self-protection so don’t use it wildly.”

Regarding the range and accuracy, I thought there was no need to consider it since it wasn’t intended for long-range sniping, but I warned her just in case.

Also, for the cartridges, I handed over 2 wooden boxes each containing 50 rounds.
For a total of 100 rounds.

By the way, though I tried to have Snow make cartridges, she didn’t succeed even once. Probably it’s impossible even for Elle-sensei.

On top of not being able to imagine the powder, the cartridges’ thickness, length, balance—none of those can be skillfully made. It seems that magicians who only have the knowledge of this world can’t make ammunition.

“Thanks, Lute-kun. I’ll use it carefully.”
“Don’t catch a cold or get hurt. Also, don’t do anything unreasonable.” Snow unexpectedly would run swiftly without thinking of the consequences.

That was the case during the goblin incident.

She smiled faintly with tears in her eyes, saying “I get it.”

Elle-sensei stood in front of Snow, replacing me.

“Snow has the talent of a magician no less than B-plus rank. However, absolutely don’t be haughty and humbly make effort. Okay?”
“Yes, understood.”
“Lastly Snow-san, you are by no means alone. There is Lute-kun, there’s also everyone at the orphanage, and also Sensei. So if life doesn’t treat you well, don’t overdo it, come back to this town. After all, this is Snow-san’s hometown, and the orphanage is your home.”
“Ye…. hii, understood. Sensei, thank you very much.”

The tears that Snow resisted, flowed down because of Sensei's words.

Not minding her surroundings, she clung to Sensei and cried.

Elle-sensei hugged her close like her actual mother.

After Snow calmed down, Elle-sensei parted with her.
Holding the wooden boxes and revolver in her hand, Snow got on the canopied horse cart.
Her luggage had already been loaded.
From the drivers' seat, the merchant roused the horned horses.
The two horned horses slowly started walking.

"Elle-sensei, everyone, thank you! Lute-kun, absolutely write me a letter! Come visit me!"

With tears flowing down, Snow earnestly waved her hand.

Sensei and the orphanage kids, and also myself, kept waving our hands until the horse cart was out of sight.

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Early in the morning 3 days after I saw Snow off.

A horned horse was tied down at the orphanage entrance.

Two small casks were tied down, balanced on its back.
Besides that some luggage hung there.

"It's not like you have to go out this early…"
"Because I'm weak to showy things like that time with Snow."

I approached the back of the horned horse I borrowed and fastened the last piece of luggage, which is the AK47.
Above the usual clothes I wore a mantle I just bought.
On the waist, a gunbelt.
All cartridges were already placed in the cylinder.
For self protection the revolver is enough.

As for the horned horse, I planned to return it at the commercial city Tver, which was a 10-day trip away from town.

There is more luggage than Snow`s. But to hire a covered wagon and a driver would be too much of a waste.
Hence I borrowed a horned horse to go towards the commercial city Tver.

If it's a large city like Tver, there's bound to be a horse cart I can ride with.

I need to pay an extra charge for the luggage and the trip will take an estimated 2 months

The magic school Snow went to is in the north with much snow.
On the other hand I'm on the exact opposite , south——I aim at a city near the beastmen continent where Elle-senseis twin younger sister lives.

I will learn the ABC of Adventurers under her.
And about 5 years after that.
I plan to start a Legion for helping people and join with Snow when she graduates from the magic school.

Elle-sensei holds one envelope out.

"Inside is a letter of introduction and the home address of my little sister, never lose it."
"Thank you! I will put it deep inside my sling bag."

I took the bag down from my back, opened it and stored the envelope in it.

Elle-sensei watches me and starts talking nostalgically.

“I’ll be frank with you now. To be honest, at the beginning, I disliked Lute kun.”
“…eh please don’t make such a shocking remark so suddenly. I was disliked by sensei?”

I finished putting the envelope away and rebuked.
She waved her hand with a faint smile.

“No its not like that. Its not dislike, it was hard. After all just when you were 3 years old you quietly listened to classes, raised problems at the magic lessons next you made the reversi game where you earned a lot of money.”

Certainly, if I look back on it, I had acted a little too unchildlike because of having some memories of my past life.

When I imagined what if my own child was someone like me, my shoulders became heavy.

About this time I noticed how much trouble I caused Elle-sensei.

“But now I think I can be proud of Lute-kun. Being able to make a magic device that could defeat goblins, not being arrogant even when having earned a lot of money, and using that power for the world and for the people in the future, normally you wouldn’t think like that.”
“No, that sort of thing… Its not something to praise to such extent.”
“No, its truly amazing. I’m rooting for your dream from the bottom of my heart Lute-kun——”

And then Elle-sensei tightly embraced me like Snow.

Just like a real mother.

“I said it also to Snow-san, Lute -kun is also not in the least alone. There is Snow-san, everyone from the orphanage and Elle-sensei. So if it’s too hard, please come back to this town. Because this town is Lute-kun’s hometown, and the orphanage is your home.”
“……Thank you. Elle-sensei.”

This is the reason for refusing to be sent off by others, except Elle-sensei.

My mental age is already over 30 years.
However, this is because I had no confidence to endure that hot thing that filled my chest.

Be it the previous world or this world, it is embarrassing to show tears in public.

I separate my face from Elle-sensei's chest and strongly wipe my eyes.

Little birds are singing, the early morning air hits my face and in the surrounding floats light mist. The sun begins to rise and the sky is painted in a clear blue.

About 9 years and a half—I think it's a good day to be the first time I go out of the town I was raised in.

For a long time I've received Elle-sensei`s favor.
"Greet my sister for me. Then, when you have settled down, turn up again. Breaking this contact is prohibited."
"Of course. Besides, once Snow and I have married, we will absolutely come and inform you."

Although this is the beginning of a journey, it's not like we will never meet again.
So I call out to Elle-sensei cheerfully.

"Well then, I'm on my way!"
"Yes, take care. Take care of your health."
"Yes!"

I nod and start walking.

I mount the horned horse, pull the rains and slowly go forward.

When I looked back and waved my hand, Elle-sensei wiped her eyes with a finger and returned it with her best smile.

Just like this, I, Lute, formerly Hotta Youta, took my first step to fulfill my dream alone, bathed in the morning sun.

Gun-Ota

- Volume 2 -

Chapter 015 - Adventurers' Guild

Lute, age 10

Equipment : S&W M10 (Revolver)

: AK-47 (Assault Rifle)

2 months after I left the Hod orphanage in the Algio region.
I arrived at the maritime town Grey, where Elle-sensei's younger sister Alle-san lives.
This town's main business is in maritime trade, and is incomparably larger than the town where the orphanage was.
Smack in the middle of town there is the elite residential area, the center of which is the place where the nobles that rule the city live, in the east is the harbor, south is the shops, north is the commoners' residential area, and west is where the things related to adventurers are.

I arrived in town in the evening, I also had lots of luggage.
Looking for Alle-san in this state is certainly troublesome.
I rented a room for 5 copper coins at an inn at the adventurers' quarter in the west of town.
When I get up tomorrow, I'll go to Alle-san's place.

The room I rented was a simple room, it had louver windows, a lock on the door, a bed, a desk, and a chair. It was something like a business hotel in my previous life.
There are cheaper inns, but because I had magic liquid metal (pricey stuff), I chose a place where I can tightly secure the doors.

After I finished eating at the bar next to the inn, I quickly returned to the room to sleep.
I put the self-defense revolver underneath the pillow and lied down.

"……..As I thought, underneath the pillow is no good."

I was a coward by nature so I thought uselessly—what if it accidentally fires.
Even though I was tired there were no signs of me falling asleep.
I gave up and took the revolver from underneath the pillow and laid it down on the table.
Thanks to that I was able to fall asleep.
In the end, I slept until almost noon the next day because of fatigue from the journey.

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"Alle? Ah, that good-for-nothing beast girl? She used to live in this place. If it's her, she was sold as a slave as collateral. Because her destination is the demon continent, she's not going to come back alive."

I asked about Alle-san at the address written in Sensei's letter.
The place is actually a back alley.
Maybe because the sun doesn't quite reach it, the place felt seriously wet. If wet laundry is left here for a week it'll sprout mushrooms.
At the roadside there is a drunk waving a beer bottle, a hobo muttering something while leaning on the wall. I can hear a man and woman's angry shouting voices, continued by the sound of something falling violently. Then there's a group looking like the mafia from my previous world suspiciously looking my way. ……. Right now I feel like I'm about to get kidnapped.

Back alleys,slum quarters, brothels——there was this smell of the underworld atmosphere here.

As I found the targeted building I knocked on the door, a sexy human woman turned up who seemed to be sleepy as if she had finished a night shift.
She weared a negligee and on top of that something like a thin cardigan.
Because it is Elle-senseis little sister shouldn't she be from the beast tribe?
When I harboured that question and asked, the previous answer came back.

“She’s famous around these parts. A problem child who goes drinking, gambling, and *shopping* usually, also causing trouble by getting into debts with her adventurer buddies. She gets into fights quickly, tough against the weak, and weak against the tough. Seriously, she was awful.”
“Alle-san is such a girl, right? I understand drinking and gambling, but *shopping*…..”
“She likes girls you know. There’s this one case where she played nice senpai to this new adventurer girl, got close to her, and when they’re in the middle of a quest she attacked her, then bragged about it in a bar.”
Being a girl and yet liking girls is…….

“She can’t borrow money from an adventurer so she got caught up in dangerous business. After all that gambling she went bankrupt. Being unable to pay back, she was transported to the demon continent as a slave. But that fellow claimed “I have a sister who manages an orphanage! If I borrow the money from graduated children who send a large amount to the orphanage that debt will be immediately returned. Because if its my sister she will absolutely pay!”.

Demon Continent—the continent where it’s said that the Demon King who hadn’t been defeated, even by the heroes of the 5 races, lives. Perhaps because of the influence of the Demon King, the quantity and quality of monsters there are much higher than the other continents.
It’s common knowledge in this world that if you go to the Demon Continent you won’t return alive.

Then, more importantly, the topic of Elle-sensei’s existence had come up in conversation.

“Eee, borrowing money from big sister, Alle-san said something like that…!?”
“Everybody knows the story about her sister spending everything she had to run an orphanage. She talks about her a lot when drunk. But of course, even those guys won’t collect money from that godlike sister, in fact, they thought this trash shouldn’t get close to her or her kids, so they made her a slave and sent her to the Demon Continent.”

Even those guys call Sensei’s little sister trash…… well, she’s certainly trash if you believe the stories.

“There are people in this world that should not be allowed to live, that are better off dead. I don’t know why you’d want to see her, but you should be glad you didn’t.”
“You’re right, I was lucky….”

I came here because of Elle-sensei’s introduction, but I was glad I didn’t really become her apprentice.
If I did, I would’ve been squeezed dry with no future in sight.

“You’re one of the kids from her big sister’s orphanage, right? If you are, then don’t tell her any of this, okay. Even if she’s trash, she’s still her family. Don’t even let her know she went to the Demon continent. The world has lots of things you’re better off not knowing, anyway.”
“Of course. In fact, I’m going to write her a letter and say that her sister went on a journey far far away.”
“Big sis likes kids who catch on quick.”

The woman smiled wryly and ruffled my hair.
Needless to say, I enjoyed the sight of her breasts swaying underneath her négligée.

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“Well then, what should I do……the plans have been greatly derailed.”

I went back to the main street, folding my arms.

There was only the trading district in the main street and there were lots of fairies, beastmen, and humans. I could also see some from the dragon and demon races, though their numbers are overwhelmingly few (They had horns on their heads and bat wings so I thought they were demons).

Moreover the stalls and market were teeming with people.
The sight of kids holding pocket money, standing in line at the sweets stalls were charming.

“I should have become Elle-sensei’s sister’s adventurer apprentice, but what to do……”

I had three choices.
1. Chase after Snow, and become an adventurer at the town next to the magic school.
2. Go back to the orphanage.
3. Begin my adventuring in this town.

Option 1 is ideal.
As I thought, I want to be with the one I love.
I did tell Snow I’ll go see her once she’s graduated, but it could be fate that things became like this, and there’s also no use staying here with no one to rely on.

But it’s tough on my mental state to set off again when I’ve only just arrived.
Compared to cars, trains, or airplanes, travelling in horse carts is really tiresome.

“For now I’ll pick 3 I think. I’ll try becoming an adventurer here, I’ll go over to Snow when I feel like it.”

Luckily I had plenty of cash thanks to Reversi.
If I’m thrifty I had enough to live for a few years.

Having decided that, I immediately went to the Adventurers’ Guild.
Right now I’m in the district where adventurers gather.
If I walk a bit, I can see the Adventurer’s Guild building.

The Adventurers’ Guild building is a 3-story wooden building.
It is about the size of a gymnasium, and adventurer-looking people keep on going in and out of it.

There were mainly Humans, Fairies (Elves or Dwarves), and Beastmen.
Dragon and Demon races were few and far in between.

Because this is a world where the Swords and Firearms Control law obviously doesn’t exist, Beastmen with large swords hanging on their backs, Dwarves holding long spears, Magicians clad in robes, and full-armored

human-seeming people were intently looking at the notices put up on a bulletin board.

I pushed through the crowd and went inside.

There was a counter, like in a bank or city hall, marked off at regular intervals.
In the space between the marks, there are receptionists talking to adventurers.

“Welcome. What business do you have today?”

As I was restlessly looking around like a country bumpkin, a woman, wearing tribal outfit, a triangle bandana on her head, and a white apron wrapped around her waist, called out to me.

All the girls working as staff for the Adventurers’ Guild were wearing the same costume.
Seems like she’s an information clerk.

“I’d like to apply to be an adventurer.”
“Then please fill in this blank form. Pardon me, but do you need help with reading or writing?”
“I’ll be fine. I can read and write.”
“Well then, when the number on this token is called, please go over to the counter.”

The wooden token was branded with the number “33”.

The desks she showed to me was, simply put, six sets of two put face to face like in a bank or post office—for a total of 12 desks placed with equal spacing.

For the sheet of paper, a quill and a inkwell were handed over to be used to fill in the necessary information.

Name, age, birthplace, race, religious faith, rank in case you are a magician, previous job, normally used weapons, used language, used letters, and so on.

The Adventurers' Guild is not involved in any death, accidents or illness, furthermore there is a requirement to pay 1 silver coin as adventurer registration fee.

I read it all without problems and wrote a ○

It took about 10 minutes to fill it all in.

Just then I was called.

"Waiting Guest number 33, this way please."

The receptionist calls me.

The receptionist seems to be from the demon race, with horns resembling sheep horns on her head and a pair of bat-like wings on her back.

She is in her early 20. If it is compared to the former world, she looked like she would have graduated junior college and would be an employed office lady.
The adventurers guild uniform suited her.

I rushed with the paper in the hand in a quick pace over.
The paper and the wooden plate with the 33 were shown to the counter and placed there.

"Please treat me well."
"Please leave it to us. Lute-kun is it? Are there any questions for today's adventurer registration?"
"No."
"Firstly, though there are no age limits for membership in the Adventurers' Guild, illness, injury, death, and any trouble encountered are the sole responsibility of the adventurers' themselves, are you sure you still want to register as an adventurer?"

Although there is no age limit for registering as an adventurer I would say I'm too young.

If I look around there is no child around my age.
Those I'm nearest in age to are 15 years old.

"It's alright. No problems. So please continue with the procedure."
"Ok. Then the registration fee will be 1 silver coin."

I fetch 1 silver coin from the leatherback, and place it on the wood saucer.

"Well then let me explain what it means becoming an adventurer.
Adventurers are ——"

The receptionist begins the explanations.

To summarize… adventurers are jacks of all trades.

Then, there are different fields of expertise, depending on the adventurer.

Those who specialize in monster extermination —Monster Hunters
Those who specialize in ruins and dungeons —Treasure Hunters
Those who specialize in guard duty —Guardians
Those who specialize in fighting against magicians —Magician Killers
Those who specialize in fighting against people —Mercenaries, Head Hunters

Et cetera, et cetera. There are many kinds of specializations. All these are just examples, furthermore they are divided further into several specialities.
Adventurers are, in a sense, a gathering of light-footed specialists (of course, there are adventurers who have several specialities).

The rankings of adventurers are—
Level I
Level II
Level III
Level IV
Level V

—divided into 5 grades.
Beginners are level I.
The highest ones are level V.

“This is Lute-san’s Adventurer Registration Tag. The number “I” denoted in the tag is your current adventurer level.”

This thin metal tag is a label showing the adventurer’s qualifications.
It is about the size of a soldier’s dog tag in my previous life.
The name, adventurer level, magic ability, and religion are magically carved on it.

I was also told about what I’m not allowed to do regarding the tag.

Tags are not to be used by anyone other than the tag holder.
Tags are not to be lent out.
Tags are not to be bought or sold.
Tags are not to be falsified, and its contents are not to be modified. (There is a special prevention magic applied, in order to confirm the tag holder’s identity, forgery is made impossible.)

In case the tag is stolen or misplaced, the Adventurers’ Guild is to be immediately notified in order to invalidate the tag.

In case the tag needs to be reissued, an interview and a reissue fee (5 silver coins) will be required.

In cases where the tag holder does not follow the above mentioned procedures, he will have his level demoted.
At worst, guild membership will be terminated, and the tag holder will not be able to register again.

Furthermore, if a tag is found during a quest, it is to be brought back to the guild for a reward.

There are 5 ways to receive jobs.
1. Getting a job request by choosing from the posts on the bulletin boards.
2. Getting a job request by choosing upon consultation with a contact person.
3. Getting a job request directly from the client.

4. Getting a job request directly from the guild.
5. Other methods (like suddenly getting rolled up in a job request)

Level I adventurers can not take jobs meant for level V.
Higher level adventurers are also not allowed to take a level I adventurer along when undertaking level V quests.

Level V quests pay quite a large sum as compensation, but those are mostly situations where their lives are at stake. The prohibition exists so that they wouldn't become a burden and because there are cases where, at worst, the precious level V talents meet their deaths.

On the contrary, level V people can take on level I jobs without any problem. No penalties are imposed.

"But by unspoken agreement, such behavior is frowned upon, and so we recommend you do not do that unless it's absolutely necessary."
"Absolutely necessary, huh… how can it be absolutely necessary for a level V adventurer to take on a level I job?"
"Requests from personal relations… or so, maybe. I think it's extremely rare for level I quests, but if it's level III, there are people who take the job for all sorts of reasons like having free time."

"The levels are raised by the guild in order depending on your efficiency when handling quests. These evaluation criteria are always fair. There are no distinctions based on race whatsoever. I swear by the name of the Heroes of the 5 Races."

After the heroes of the 5 races sealed the demon king, they let their pupils exterminate demons who were still rampant in the whole world.
That was how the Adventurers' Guild began.

Because of that, the outlines of the heroes of the 5 races were branded on the Adventurers' Guild signboard.

"Are there any points of the explanation that you don't understand?"
"It's not that I don't understand, but I want to start a Legion in the future. Could you please tell me if there are any requirements to start a Legion.
"Yes, of course."

The receptionist cheerfully responded to the statement about starting a legion, even though it was made by a beginner.
Such a friendly woman.
For a person like this to become a madonna at her workplace, becoming the object of admiration of adventurers, marrying, and then retiring, surely everyone would give their blessings, albeit begrudgingly.

As I consider such things the receptionist explains the conditions to establish a legion.

“In order to establish a legion the founder needs a level 5 as sponsor and more than two level 4’s signatures. In case a legion is raised, every year an amount of money due to proceeds is to be paid as a fixed sum of taxes to the adventurer union guild.”

“Why does a tax needs to be paid?”

At that unexpected condition I ask spontaneously in return.

“In return for the taxes paid, you get preferential assignment of good quests or quests that you prefer, and also introductions to talented personnel that you may want.”

Indeed for that case it is a merit.

Naturally in case the amount of taxes is swindled, additional taxes have to be paid or in the worst case, the rights of a legion will be revoked.
Lastly it was declared that the troubles of the legion are of no concern to the adventurer union guild.

“Well then I will introduce the quests.”

Finally I have become an adventurer!

According to the explanation

In case of level 1 there are weeding, help moving, searching for lost pets, working as a tutor(this is slightly better paid)—— normally you will get 5

big copper ~ 1 silver coin.
If I complete one I will be not troubled about meals and lodging for 1 day.

Level 2 are monster extermination in the outskirts——normally you will get 1 silver coin ~ 3 silver coins.

For Level 3 its needed to go afar, there are high level monster exterminations, guarding wagons, etc. —— normally you will get 1 silver coin ~ 1 gold coin depending on negotiations.
From here on depositing money occurs.
It is a system intended to prevent taking on jobs without actually doing them. The money is refunded after the quest.
Also this becomes beyond the work of an individual.

On Level 4 jobs there are further discussions that are needed. The amount of pay is negotiable. Guarding important people, exterminating magicians with a bounty, etc.

Level 5 are 1 stray dragon,1 giant etc. exterminations.

“Becoming a level IV or V is no longer based on assessment of the individual, but of the team.”
“What is the difference between a team and a legion?”
“Firstly, Legions have Legion names. Teams do not have names and point out the case there random adventurers without acquaintance gather temporarily.” EN: ???

The merit of teams is that there is no particular restriction in numbers, no taxes, and so on.
The downside is that it is hard for them to get assigned good quests that wouldn’t go to the Legions, they also can’t complain if their talented personnel get scouted.

The plus side of Legions is that it’s easier to get good quests and being able to maintain a standard level of competence by way of enrollment tests. Also, they can establish terms for leaving the Legion and regulations, inflicting penalties if those are violated. If the violation is intolerable, the violator can at worst be banished from the Adventurers’ Guild.

There are demerits that let you hesitate in many cases, taxes must be paid to the adventurers guild, once entered one cannot easily slip out after the enrollment and so on.

“For Lute-kun who is a Level 1, you can receive quests like tutoring, pet searching, shopping agent, store helper, assist in public work, medical plant gathering etc. How is it?”
“Is there a quest where it is needed to fight against monsters?”

Although I don’t say it, I want to find out how effective an modern weapon, the AK47, is against the monsters who live in the outskirts.
In my situation I could fight, but bullets aren’t for free.
To earn money is human nature.

“A beginner like Lute-san receives this sort of easy quest to get used to questing and to get proper practice. Getting excessively self-confident in this industry, one could lose his life. I recommend performing from here safely little by little.”
“Of course I understand that. But I want to know to what degree my own strength works from here on. So are there level 1 monster extermination works?”

I look upwards with tear moist eyes.
That posture is made with a child’s body.
If an ossan of 30 years where to mimic that he can’t complain if he’s struck down.

“…haa okay. But please escape immediately when you think its dangerous. You have no more than one life.”

After worrying, the receptionist lady submits.
After giving me a warning, a document sheet is taken out.

“Among the level 1, this job is very dangerous. Please exterminate 1 or more of the four legged demons called garugaru. The quests time frame is indefinitely.”

When I read the document the garugaru seem to be meat-eating demons who attack livestock and cultivated fields of humans outside the walls.
Because of that the reward is 1 silver coin each.

Regarding high level adventurers the garugaru isn't a big monster but it seems to take time and effort to bring it down.
Additionally to that the reward is low so people with a high level don't get involved with it.

As for low levels, especially level 1 adventurers, it is a formidable enemy who moves fast and is difficult to attack.
Therefore it seems it has become a standard whether or not one can become a level 2 if you can defeat a garugaru or not.

After defeating it, it is necessary to cut the tail from it as proof and bring it to the adventurer guild, whereupon it is converted.
One tail is exchanged for 1 silver coin.

They appeared along the south, west, north, gates and came out of the forest surrounding the fields.
They attack the livestock and the cultivated fields there.

Also, I was told that I need to bury or burn the carcasses of the monsters after defeating them.
Because if I leave the carcasses as they are, other monsters will come to feed on it and multiply.

The recommended way of dealing with them is by using magic potion.
Using the magic potion recommended by the Adventurers' Guild on the carcass, other monsters will be kept away from eating it by the odor it emits, that is disliked by monsters living around this area.
Also, because the carcass decomposes, after three days not even bones will remain.

The Adventurers' guild support store is on your left hand side if you exit the guild.
It's recommended to get the magic potion there.
If you show the adventurer tag you get slightly cheaper prices compared to other miscellany stores.

"Well then, please let me take on this "garugaru extermination" quest."
"…… then, please let me see your tag."

The receptionist wrote on the tag with a feather pen that seemed to be a magic device.

When I look at the tag that was handed back to me, there was the job details of the quest written underneath the place where my personal info is.

“Well, please be careful then. Run away immediately if you judge that it’s impossible, okay.”
“Thank you very much! I’ll do my very best.”

Then I took on my first quest.

Chapter 016 – First Quest

After accepting the quest in the adventurer guild, I entered the support tool shop on the left of the adventurer guild to buy the monster clearing potion.

The size of the store is that of a convenience store.
Alongside the walls are placed red, blue, yellow, purple, and so forth liquids in bottles, bundles of medicinal plants, various differently sized stones, etc.
Each price tag had several numbers on it, among them there were stones that couldn't be seen yet had a high prize pasted on it.

I looked at everything from start to end, then asked the lady sitting at the counter near the entrance about where the potion is.

The lady smiled and took a bottle from the front shelf.
It was a blue bottle about 250 ml big.

I checked the price, it was 1 silver coin.

Expensive!? Too expensive! Isn't this more expensive than magic liquid metal!?

I was about to raise my voice, but held back.
But the lady explained that only a small dose needs to be applied on carcasses. So this bottle won't run out so quickly.

So I paid the price and bought the potion, and asked the tool shop lady where I might buy a knife.
I have a gun so I won't be needing a sword, but I still need a knife.
She told me that the weapons and armor shop in front was a Magician's guild support store.

I said my thanks, then left the store and went into the weapons and armor shop.

A knife is priced at 3 silver coins.
I mentioned about using one to cut off the tails of defeated garugaru, and chose a somewhat thick knife.
While I'm there, I also bought a leather bag to put the tails in.
This one is 6 large copper coins.

Once I'm back at the inn, I made my preparations.

I put the "S&W M10" revolver in my gun belt. Fully loaded.
I loaded the AK-47 with a banana magazine, and confirmed that the specially-made leather sling is in place.

I put two spare magazines in a specially-made magazine pouch on the left side of the gunbelt.
I put two spare magazines, one on each side of my backpack. I also put in a box of ammunition for the revolver.

Moreover, I equipped the knife I just bought on the back of my hip.
With this I am fully armed.

In addition, I put the leather bag, magic potion, a canteen made from magic liquid metal, and a sandwich (crunchy fried meat, tomato-like vegetable, and hard baked egg) in the backpack.

I also took a 500 ml portion of magic liquid metal, just in case. The container is made from magic liquid metal. I carefully sealed it and put it down.
I bundled the monster clearing potion with cloth and put it on top so it doesn't break.

I put the backpack on, slung the AK-47 on my shoulder, and left the inn.

"Well then, I think I should try going out by the west gate and walking around the forest."

I left the west ward, where adventurer-related buildings are, and went out the gate.
I showed my tag to the gatekeeper and was immediately allowed to go outside.

Like that, I walked and left the fields and ranches, then followed the forest's edge.

After about 30 minutes of walking.
100 m ahead, some 4-legged creatures came out from the forest. Three of them.

They had triangular fox-like ears, pointed fangs, and agile-looking thin bodies, their tails spread out like bamboo brooms, and quite a volume of fur.

They look just like stray dogs. So these are garugaru, huh.

In the world of my previous life, the father of combat karate, Ooyama Masutatsu, said "Once a human holds a sword, they finally became equal to cats"

Certainly, a beginner would find it to be a hard fight using swords or spears against monsters showing such hostility .

"Ooooooooooooooo!!!"

The three garugaru took me for prey and ran while howling.
For monsters, a child's meat is a feast.
I wasn't even holding a sword, and was lazily walking alone, to them I must look like a "duck carrying an onion".

But I took the AK-47 down from my shoulder without panicking.

I released the safety switch.
I set it to full-auto.

I pulled the cocking handle, and a bullet entered the firing chamber.
I raised my physical abilities with body strengthening.
I faced the enemy with a kneeling shot pose, my right knee on the ground, and my left foot on tiptoes.

I had the stock on my shoulder.
I turned the muzzle towards the garugaru.

Of course, the garugaru know nothing of assault rifles.
So even with the muzzle pointed at them they did not run, and ran straight towards their prey.
In order to bring all three of them down, I drew them in so they don't run away.

Only a 30 m distance remained.

I took a breath—I held it so it doesn't interfere with my shooting.
I pressed the trigger.

BANG! BABABABABANG!

The rhythmic sound of firing.
The three garugaru lining up side-to side shot by 7.62mm Russian Shots in the heads and shoulders instantly died and fell down.

The battle ended in less than 10 seconds.

I went closer, keeping my body strengthening just in case.
I poked them with my foot, but there was no reaction.
They are certainly dead.

"That went quicker than I thought…… It's thanks to the AK-47. In fact, it's way overkill for enemies of this level."

I re-enabled the safety on the AK-47 for now, and slung it back on my shoulder.

I pulled out the knife from my waist and removed all the tails.
Taking out the leather bag from the backpack, I put the tails in and tied up the opening.

I sprinkled several drops of the potion I bought at the tool shop on the garugaru carcasses.
I tried smelling it, but to my nose it doesn't really have a smell.
Maybe it's not at a level that can be detected by humans.

I packed the potion and the leather bag full of tails back in my backpack.

Because I put the severed ends on the bottom, the tips of the tails pop out of my backpack.
The fur touches the back of my head.
It felt surprisingly good to the touch.
Doesn't seem like it's going to hinder my battles, too.

"That was amazing just now. You took down a number of those carnivorous garugaru in an instant."
"!?"

A voice called out to me from the forest, I immediately pointed my AK-47 there.

"Wa, wait a minute! Please wait! We're adventurers!"

A man held both his hands up, showing me that he was unarmed.
Additionally, behind that man, two people—one man and one woman came out.

They didn't seem to be hostile.
The man standing at the back had a disappointed expression, but that might just be how his face originally looks.

"Sorry, sorry for startling you. We hid ourselves and came closer because we heard the garugaru howling. We didn't mean to surprise you."

The blonde-haired cat-eared popular-looking man that spoke the first time lightly said his apologies.

It's easy to see from the cat ears that he's from the beast race.
Two short swords were equipped at his waist.

"Nah, I'm sorry too. I inadvertently pointed my assault rifle—my magic device."
"You're an adventurer right? I've never seen your face though, are you a newbie?"
"Ye, yes. I just registered today."

The woman standing behind peeked at my face with great interest.

Her silver hair was cut short, her chest was covered with leather armor but her navel was left exposed. She had brown skin. She was wearing a pair of low-rise trousers.
She was holding a bow, and was carrying arrows on her back.
Her golden eyes had vertical pupils. She looked like she was human, but it seems she was of the demon race.

“Uwaa! Really, a newbie!? Yet you insta-killed these garugaru. We met a guy who easily surpass us again. And he’s still a kid, too. What a huge shock, Akent!”
“Being an adventurer has nothing to do with age.”
“Ahahaha, that’s certainly true!”

The man standing at the back rejected the blonde beastman’s words.

The man called Akent had short-cut hair, a muscular body, and also an 180cm tall stature.
The deep cuts carved on his face were silent proof of his experience.
His weapon was a crude longsword that he carries on his back.
From the looks of him, he seems to be a human like me.

He turned his back and returned towards the forest again.

“Oy! Where are you going!”
“…… getting back to the job.”
“I’m sorry, Akent is not good with people. It’s not that he’s angry at you or anything. Well, sorry for interrupting you. Good luck on your quest.”
“No, I don’t mind. You guys do your best too.”
“Wait, you two don’t leave me behind!”

Cat-ears went after Akent, the brown-skinned oneesan followed up with a wink and went after them.
I bowed my head like a newbie adventurer toward these senpais.

It seems that normally several people would handle a single quest just like them.
Since I’ll soon be going to the town near the magic school where Snow is, I’ll soon be able to go on quests together with her.
Though it’s only when she’s not busy.

“But in her case, if I called her out she’d skip class and go with me anyway……”

Other than that, I was worried that she’d be easily tricked by other people as her idiot kid transformation went on.
This world is a dangerous place, so it won’t be good unless I tell her to be careful.

“Well, never mind about things past. Whatever happens I’m going to be gathering experience as long as I’m here”

Though something unexpected happened, my first fight went with no problem at all.
If the monsters are at this level, I can bring them down easily.

“Well, then I should keep on exterminating monsters before the sun sets.”

Putting the AK-47 back, I once again continued walking.

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After that, I continued walking along the forest.
I had good luck, and encountered groups of 4-5 garugaru one after the other.
Of course, I drew them in until the last moment and annihilated them.
Once I had 30 tails, I went back towards town.

I arrived back in town before the sun had completely set.
Bathed in the evening sun, I stopped by at an Adventurers’ Guild Exchange Center under the west gate.

The area around the exchange center was packed in the afternoon, it felt just like a marketplace.
Large quantities of scales put inside wooden boxes, rainbow-colored mushrooms, huge horns that felt like steel—and so on, was lined up in large

amounts.
The monster parts being exchanged can be turned into fine items. For that reason even merchants had gathered, brimming with energy.

Because I was small in size, I can get to the counter without a problem.

I called out to the old man at the counter.

"'Scuse me, I'd like to have garugaru tails assessed. The amount is 31 tails."
"Hou!? 31 tails is it? All by yourself?"
"Yes, I got lucky and met several groups one after the other."

I handed over the leather bag carrying the garugaru tails to the middle-aged human man minding the counter.

The man continued,

"Please show me your adventurer tag"
"why?"
"I have to temporarily record your transaction information on the tag. If you confirm that information at the Adventurers' Guild, it will be used to grade you for a level increase."

I see, I see.
I said my thanks and took out the tag hanging from my neck.

The man took out the tails from the bag and counted.
He confirmed the number twice, and put 31 tails × 1 silver coin = 3 gold coins + 1 silver coin.
Then, he recorded the information on the tag with a magic feather pen.
Then I confirmed the amount of money and put it in my leather wallet, then received back my tag.

"Speaking of which, what kind of item are these tails going to become?"
"Garugaru tails are flexible and strong, if I had to explain, there are lots of things it can be used for. Also, it can become high-class dusters. The length of these tails, the softness of the fur, the size, either way it would be fine, right?"

Now that you mention it, it can certainly be used as dusters.
Though I don't think common people will get their hands on one, since he said it was a high class item and therefore expensive.

I left the Adventurers' Guild Exchange Center and went back to the inn, I temporarily put all my stuff aside and had a meal at the bar next door.
Then, I quickly slipped into bed.

I was tired after my first quest.
I can make my report at the Adventurers' Guild tomorrow, right.

I closed my eyes, and fell into a deep sleep immediately.

Chapter 017 - Result Report

The faint morning sun spilled in from the louver windows and roused my eyes, I woke up.

“Uu……”

It was a bother to get up by myself, when I was in the orphanage somebody would come wake me up.

I took off my thin clothes, and changed them for clothes to go outside.

I wore the gunbelt that was lying on top of the table around my waist.
Taking the “S&W M10” in hand, I popped the cylinder out. I confirmed that it was fully loaded.
I also hung the adventurer tag left alongside it on my neck, and put on Snow’s engagement bracelet on my left arm.

I told the old man in charge of the inn that I will be staying for another day, and paid him 5 large copper coins.
The bar next door was of course still closed, so I once again bought a sandwich from a cart on the way.

Today’s sandwich was made of barley bread, with a cut of salmon-like fish and onion-like vegetables inside.
It cost me 3 copper coins.

I ate while walking in bad manners, and went towards the Adventurers’ Guild.
I arrived just as I had finished eating.

Despite being so early in the morning, there are already a large number of people gathered at the Adventurers’ Guild.

As I went inside, I was handed a wooden token from the information desk.
The number was “12”.
I was definitely earlier than yesterday.

It had not even been 10 minutes, the number “12” was called.
The person in charge was the kind demon race oneesan from yesterday.

“Good morning, Lute-san. What will your business be today?”
“I finished yesterday’s quest, and came here today looking for a new one.”
“Already? Then, let me see your tag please.”

I handed the tag hanging on my neck to the oneesan.
The oneesan received the tag, and confirmed it saying, “I’ll be taking care of it”.

“Umm, certainly yesterday’s quest is… you exterminated 1 garugaru more… fuee!?”

She made a sound much unlike a receptionist oneesan.
She seems to be surprised with my results.
She got strange looks from the other adventurers and coworkers, but remained in confusion without noticing them.

“Y, you hunted 31 all in one day yesterday!? That’s too amazing!”
“Is it really that amazing?”

I wanted to raise my level as fast as possible, but I don’t know how far garugaru hunting will go towards raising my adventurer level.
Because of that I did my best and kept on hunting, but is it that surprising?

“Of course it is! Listen here, in this Adventurers’ Guild, the record for the number of garugaru hunted in one day is 10. And at the time, the person was a B+ ranked magician.”

…… Well that would certainly be surprising. A child that’s not even a magician hunting 31 garugaru.
Oneesan continued her talk.

“The monsters are also not dumb, they would run away if they sense magic power. So even magicians can’t hunt this much.”

So that might be why I could hunt that many monsters.
Because the garugaru did not sense magic power, and was faced with a weapon they didn’t know of.

The oneesan narrowed her eyes in doubt.

“Did you have someone to help you by any chance?”
“No way, I did it by myself. It was because I had a good weapon.”
“Yeah, you’re right. If there is a helper with this kind of hunting ability, they’d have more to gain by hunting on their own…”

Having agreed, oneesan edited the tag using the magic feather pen.

“In that case I once again congratulate you. With this quest, Lute-san’s adventurer level has increased to level II”

Ooh, it got raised so quickly!

It looks like the Adventurers’ Guild made fair evaluations based on results, even if the adventurer was a child.

“Will you be taking a level II quest today?”
“Yes. Please make it a monster extermination quest like before.”
“Monster subjugation, is it. Now that you’re a level II, you can take quests going inside forests and quests for dealing with stronger monsters. The ordinary subjugation quests posted on the board pay about 1-3 silver coins per monster.”

She then listed the payments for eliminating each of the subjugation target monsters.

Garugaru, 1 silver coin.
Goblins, 1 silver coin.
Giant spider, 2 silver coins.
Man-eating lizard-snakes, 2 silver coins.
Orcs, 3 silver coins.

These seem to be the general outline of the monsters living in the forests on the outskirts of the maritime town Grey.

I have defeated GaruGaru's yesterday.
And a long time ago I defeated goblins at the age of 8.
The great spider is a spider that is about 6 times larger than a common spider and attacks living things in the forest as a group.
The man eating lizard-snakes are poisonous, the poisoned prey will be unable to move and eaten by the big snake.
Orcs are 2~3m big demons with low intelligence but with strength and they're resilient.

All of them are fairly strong but probably no enemy for the AK47.
It seems, at level 2 there are no high grade demons yet.

It seems the only one among them i need to be careful about is the poison of the man-eating lizard-snake. But at the tool shop an antidote fruit to that poison is sold and when eaten it immediately neutralizes it.
Once I get outside the Adventurers' Guild it won't be a problem to buy some.

If it's as easy as this, I will be able to do level 2 quests as well.
If I have the modern weapons 'S&W M10' and 'AK47', suppression-like quests don't seem difficult.

It's an easy victory even if there is no particular adventurer teacher. Alright, I will keep going till I'm level 5 and surprise Snow.

——because I easily rose to level 2 I got extremely carried away.

At this time, I didn't know that there is a trap that would warp my fate on a grand scale.

"Are you alone Lute-kun? In case you enter the forest for the first time I recommend to buy a map in the adventurer supported shop."

“A map?”
“It’s for not getting lost in the forest. Unless you are together with a skilled adventurer, it’s safer to carry one. The price is 3 silver coins.”

For an instant, I thought 3 silver coins are expensive for a map.
But in this world there is no printing technique, everything is handwritten.
It is a consenting price, if I think about it.

However, even if I have the AK47, it’s dangerous to get lost inside the forest.
I may run out of ammoThe bullets may be used up and there are concerns about food.
I will buy it according to the advice.

“Then since you have become level 2 please return after exterminating at least 2 or more carnivorous garugaru. The quests time frame is indefinitely.”

I received the tag where the level 2 quest was carved into the back and recalled something in my mind.

I tell my thanks the reception lady and leave the adventurer guild.

Without delay I will buy the map and antidote fruit, then head towards the adventurer guild supported tool shop.

Chapter 018 - Level 2 Quest Preparation

After undertaking the level 2 quest I leave the adventurer guild.
Promptly, I go left towards the adventurer-guild-supported-tool-shop to buy the map and the antidote fruit.

As I was about to enter the tool shop I was greeted from behind.

“You, wait just a minute for me. Can we talk for a moment?”
“?”

When I looked behind me, there stood a boy about as tall as me, carrying a backpack.
Pickaxe, lanterns, sleeping bags, and bottles hung from the side of the backpack that he was carrying.

“Nice to meet you, my name is Raachi, of the Dwarf Race. I am a rootless merchant travelling from town to town without stopping at inns.”

Dwarf Race.
One of the fairy races that live in the interior of the Fairy Human Continent’s west side.
Even when full grown, their size is only about that of a human child.

Even this Raachi guy only looks like a human child at first glance.
If you look closely, he doesn’t have a child’s charm, but had the air of a little villain in some way.
Speaking in terms of my previous life, he is like a certain ghost mouse youngster.

“Thank you for the courtesy. I am Lute, a human.”
“Lute-bocchan is it? Nice name! Since you were going to enter a miscellany store, that means you’re looking for something, right? This might be some kind of fate, if you will. Would you like to look at my goods?”

I see, a high-pressure salesman.
I shouldn't be dealing with the likes of these.
I am a Japanese person that can say "No!", if only in spirit!

"I was going to buy them at the Guild support store so I'll have to refuse."
"Don't say that! Just take a look! Just a look!"
"Even if you say that, you intend to make me buy. I'm not going to fall for that trick!"
"Really, I just want you to look! Also, my goods are cheaper than those at other tool shops! So just take a look for a little while!"

He caught my hand and persisted.
But if his stuff is really that cheap, I might even buy something.

"…… well then, I guess I'll just take a look."
"Yes yes, thank you very much! Then, what might you be looking for?"
"Antidote fruits and a map of the surrounding forest."

"I see! Then I can offer you something cheap! Antidote fruits are 1 large copper coin at miscellany shops, but I'll give it to you for 5 coppers! The map is 3 silvers but I'll sell you for 1 silver!"

They're certainly cheap.
Furthermore, the price of the map is just like the oneesan at the counter said earlier, strangely, this guy doesn't lie.
If it's like this, then I wonder if I should buy something.

"You'll really sell them for 5 coppers and 1 silver?"
"Really, I will. There are nasty fellas who'd sell half a map for 1 silver, then make you buy the other half for 3 silvers, but I'm not one to do something like that. You can check the goods before you buy, if you want."

Raachi declared, puffing his chest.
If he says that much, he might just be telling the truth.

"Got it. Then, antidote fruits and a map, please."
"Thanks for the purchase!"

Raachi puts his backpack down and rummaged in it while humming.
Meanwhile, I prepared the money from my wallet.

“One silver coin, and 5 copper coins…. ah, I only have large copper coins, do you have change?”
“Of course. I’m not about to make a blunder like that.”
“Don’t cheat me on the change, okay.”
“Really, trust me. I won’t do that kind of underhanded scheme.”

Of course, I was joking about the change.
Raachi seems to understand, and replied rather theatrically.

“Oi.”

A large hand gripped Raachi’s head.

The one holding Raachi’s head was one of the three adventurers I met at the forest yesterday while I was in the middle of a quest—the man called Akent. Behind Akent, the golden-haired popular-looking cat-eared man and the silver-haired demon-race girl were waving their hands at me while smiling.

Raachi looked up at Akent and forced a smile, turning blue in the face.

“W, well hello there. Ee… my luck today is……”
“Get lost.”
“E, excuse me!”

Raachi picked his backpack back up without closing it and ran towards the crowd in panic.
Soon, his figure could no longer be seen.

girori, Akent sent a piercing glance at me.
He scolded me with a menacingly low voice.

“That guy is well-known around here for being a two-bit peddler. He sells trashy tools and maps.”
“I, is that so?”
“He’s a little scoundrel who makes money tricking kids who don’t know how the world works, like you.”
“Thank you very much. You saved me there.”

I gave Akent a polite bow, but his crusty face didn’t change at all.

“For adventurers, our tools are directly related to our lives. While you’re a beginner you should buy things at stores with Adventurers’ Guild marks. Leave the roadside peddlers to your seniors. Beginner kids like you shouldn’t do that, even by accident.”
“I’m sorry……”

He gave a speech in a disinterested low voice.
I hung my head in shame and said my apologies.

“Stop the halfhearted sermon right there. Doesn’t he look completely scared? Didn’t he start becoming an adventurer just yesterday? And isn’t he still a kid? Getting so mad would have the opposite effect.”

The demon-race girl stopped Akent’s speech.

“Sorry, even though this guy is unsociable he likes children. He just can’t leave a little kid like you alone.”

The cat-eared ikemen followed up in a cheerful tone.
Akent turned away in silence, seems like what Cat-ears said is true.
Somehow his face turned red.

“But well, it’s good that you didn’t get tricked. I am Alcedo, of the cat-eared race. I am a level II adventurer. Nice to meet you.”
“Lute-kun of the human race. Level II adventurer. Truly, thank you very much for saving me.”

I shook hands with the ikemen cat-ears Alcedo, who had presented his hand.
It seems that adventurers mention their levels when introducing themselves.

“I’m Misha, of the demon race. Adventurer level is II. But, I think maps wouldn’t be a problem for someone as strong as Lute-kun.”

I also shook hands with the short silver-haired brown-skinned Misha.

“Then that unsociable one over there is our team leader, Akent. A human just like Lute. Adventurer level is III. Hey, introduce yourself.”
“……’m Akent.”

His 2 companions made a shocked face at that unsociable greeting.

I gave my thanks to them once again.

“Thank you very much for saving me from getting tricked.”
“It’s fine already. Adventurers are all about give-and-take, see.”

Alcedo laughed cheerfully.

“By the way, since you said you needed antidote fruits and a map of the forest, were you going to go into the Grey forest?”
“Yes, I had received a level II quest just a while ago.”
“Then, would you like to go on the quest together?”
“With everyone?”

Misha explained with an amiable smile.

“Truthfully, we also received a level II quest yesterday, but the target Orc was nowhere to be found. We even went deep inside the forest, but had no luck whatsoever but it was no use. So, we were talking about going to a far away place where orcs are bound to exist, even if it would take a day to get there.”

Misha bent her body down from the waist and looked at my face.

“So, if it’s alright with Lute-kun, how about going with us? I’m uneasy with being the only long-range attack capability. We saw Lute-kun’s true strength yesterday, it would be reassuring if you could come with us.”

The valley between her breasts flitters in front of my eyes.
Her healthy brown skin.
Burying my head between those silky smooth breasts would feel good, like going to heaven.

(*Nonono! I already have a fiancee called Snow! Don’t get confused!*)

Temptation attack aside, it's a charming proposal if you really think about it.
I am still a beginner myself.
There are many advantages of joining their experienced team.

Alcedo supports Misha's invitation.

"It's not really a strictly regulated thing like a Legion, just a temporary team, you don't have to think too hard about it. It's okay to leave in the middle if you don't like it. If you join up, we'll teach you the way to make camp, the lay of the land, and the necessary techniques and knowledge for being an adventurer."
"Uhh…… Why do you have to go so far?"

Toward my obvious question, Misha and Alcedo looked at each other, their expressions changed.

Alcedo replied with an over-the-top answer.

"We saw Lute's power yesterday, we want to pick you up before other teams or Legions could get to you."

I see, so in other words, a prior investment, huh.

Also—Misha added her own reasons.

"When we were beginners we also had some seniors take care of us, they taught us the basics of adventuring. If Lute-kun feels indebted to us, you can take another beginner under your wing when you grow up."

If you put it that way, how can I refuse.
I let down my guard and bowed my head.

"Please let me be in a team with you all. I might be causing you some trouble since I just became an adventurer, but please take care of me."
"Yahoo! Now you're talking! We'll split up the rewards according to what each of us defeated so we wont come to a disagreement."

It seems that the preparation of things needed for camp will be left to Akent and the others.
They said that I only needed to buy the antidote fruits and map for today.
How nice of them.

“So we’ll meet up again after lunch at the west gate.”
“Understood. See you then.”
“See you later, Lute-kun.”
“……”

I bowed my head at the three who were slipping into the crowd, and once again went into the Adventurers’ Guild support miscellany shop.
Then I bought a map (3 silver coins).
And 5 antidote fruits (5 large copper coins).

I got out of the shop and went straight back to the inn.
I started packing the provisions for my new expedition in my room.

AK-47. 6 magazines.
“S&W M10” revolver. 1 box of bullets.
Map, 5 antidote fruits, spare magic liquid metal (1 liter portion), leather bag for monster parts, a change of clothes, thin blanket, raincoat, potion.
I also bought a travel cloak when I got to maritime city Grey.

“With this much preparation I can throw down 100 monsters with room to spare.”

After finishing all the preparations, I went to the bar next door with the canteen in hand.
I finished my lunch, paid the old man at the bar and asked him to fill my canteen with water.
Now all the preparation is complete.

Just in case, I paid the old man at the inn 3 days’ worth of inn fees in advance.

I walked out toward the west gate with my pack on my back.
The trio was already at the gate.

“Sorry, I was late.”
“No no, we also just got here.”
“We actually came here a bit early, so don’t worry about it.”
“Oi, enough talking, let’s get going.”

Alcedo and Misha followed up in succession.
But Akent just walked away on his own, blunt as ever.

“Good grief, he really can’t be honest….. Sorry, that guy, he’s always like that.”
“Though he really isn’t a bad guy.”

The two was surprised and covered for Akent.

“I get it already, I’m all right.”

He already saved me once.
If I just imagine he’s a tsundere bishoujo in my head, this kind of interaction is no problem!

I took on a level II quest together with my newly-met companions.

Chapter 019 - Trap

I started becoming an adventurer, and thanks to the AK-47, immediately got to level II.
Then I met some nice seniors and went to challenge a quest together.

I guess I was lucky. I wonder if this is because of my good behavior. No, maybe my natural charm?

Weeell…… there was a time when I thought like that.

“Th, the hell is thiiiiiiiiiiss!!!”

I woke up to find my limbs being tied together.

H, how did it get to this point?

I was sure I met up with Akent (a quiet human man) and the other 2, then went out the west gate and moved along the forest together.
We encountered garugaru several times along the way, but as soon as they saw our numbers and equipment they turned away. Being in a group of 4 sure makes you feel safe, or so I recalled.

Without encountering any particular danger, before the sun went down we set out to make camp.
Akent and the others skilfully dug the earth and made wooden supports for pots with the branches they used for digging.
Then they planted stakes with boxes attached on the ground in all directions as if to surround the camp.
The boxes were magic devices to let us know when invaders were to enter the space they surrounded. It seems to be an essential item for adventurers.

Thus the camp preparations finished and we ate dinner prepared by Misha (the brown-skinned demon race woman).
Barley bread and red soup.

Barley bread is half the price of wheat bread. They were hard and not very tasty, but they become softer when put into soup, so it's recommended to eat them that way.

I did as they said, breaking the barley bread into small pieces, putting them in the soup, and ate them.

Despite its red appearance, the soup was creamy and sweet like stew. I didn't know what meat she used, but the stock was used well and it was delicious—I do not remember anything afterwards.

Then when I opened my eyes I had been stripped of my cloak and shoes, my limbs had been tied and I was rolled down on the ground.
Judging from the wood that was burning, we hadn't moved from that place.

"It looks like you woke up."

Alcedo (the cat-eared blonde-haired beastman) approached me wearing a frivolous smile.
He was holding the AK-47 in his hands.

Akent and Misha followed behind him.
They were each holding the "S&W M10", a banana magazine, and 9mm bullets.

Alcedo continued his talk, smiling frivolously.

"Well, Lute's magic device is really something, huh. Bringing down garugaru and goblins so easily like that."
"But still, you were too hilarious. Going "bang bang bang" like a kid. What are you, an idiot?"
"That's all right, wasn't it? It was fun after all."
"Ain't it."

The 2 men let out a vulgar laugh, "kyahahahaha."

I know this feeling all too well.

It was just like the feeling of the three dumbasses during the days when I was bullied.

While being aware of fear welling up from deep within, I asked the three who seemed to have changed characters.

“D, don’t touch people’s magic devices without permission. That’s thoughtless!”
“Ha? You still don’t understand where you stand?”

Akent crouched down, looking at me who was rolled down on the ground.

“We dosed up your food and bound you up with rope. Rather, we tricked you, get it already.”
“!?”

I kind of expected this, but…….

“We are all former adventurers. We’re a group of people who broke the guild rules and got banished. We dress ourselves as adventurers like this, and prey on dumb beginners like you.”
“Then yesterday we saw your magic device’s power. All we did was see but it was so awesome, we thought it would make us quite a bit of money. We could get our hands on it safely, oneesan is happy.”

“But still, we didn’t think that you would believe us and eat the food so easily.”
“Right? So we made lots of traps to catch you in, and yet, all those were for nothing. I would have never thought that simply the first sleeping pill would work. On the contrary I thought it was some kind of trap.

Alcedo breathed a sigh, his cat-ears twitching.

Then Akent continued.

“Normally you wouldn’t take an offer of food from someone you just met, since you don’t know what kind of person they are. Generally when you join

a team, first you check the adventurer tag, and see if their level is really what they claim. That's common sense. Just what kind of country bumpkin are you, to not know something like that."

In Hoad town, where the orphanage was, adventurers rarely ever came.

In the first place, I almost never had any business to go to town, and immersed myself in experimenting and making my guns, so I don't have any knowledge of that.

Of course, now that it had come up, I never even once confirmed or even saw their adventurer tags.

Why didn't I realize it, I wonder.

I was supposed to understand that this world is a dangerous place. I had told Snow to be careful since she was easy to trick, as if it was other people's problem's.
Thanks to that, it became like this.

This was because I came to this town and wasn't able to become Elle-sensei's sister's student.
If it's like this, I should have immediately left town and chased after Snow.

"Then, was that dwarf one of your comrades!?"
"That guy, we employed him. Paid him as bait to make us look reliable."
"It was hard to suppress our laughter when you look at us like we were "good guys" after being helped."

Misha laughed happily, being reminded of that.

"Kuu——"

I clenched my teeth in regret, until my molars seem like they would break.

"……Now what, what do you intend to do with me? Kill me?"
"We're going to sell you at the Demon Continent. Human children fetch a high price on the Demon Continent. We can get quite some money out of you."

Akent says, the ones being sold to the Demon Continent were mostly adult men who had fallen into debt or went bankrupt.
They were used as miners to get coal, gems, magic stones, iron ore, gold, silver, or copper.

It's like being in a tuna fishing boat in Japan in my previous life.

They mostly meet with accidents there and lose their lives.
There were very few people who could save money and buy themselves back.

If they sweep up children from villages or towns there is a high chance of being tracked since there were so many witnesses. For child adventurers, however, if they went missing everyone would think they got eaten by monsters because of not enough experience.

Lute is going to be a boy toy in the beginning, then once you grow up you'll be sent to the coal mines—so they declared.

"If it's you, we can sell you for 100 gold coins♪"

Misha admired me, looking happy. I'm not happy at all!

(Gimme a break! I'm still a virgin and you want me to surrender my ass!?)

I judged escape was my first priority. So I immediately concentrated magic power in my hands and legs.
It's unfortunate about the AK-47 and M10, but going against three armed adventurers was too much for me.
I thought, once I could cut this rope, I'd concentrate on running away.

——But that hope was immediately dashed.
I could not control my magic power.

"It's no use. As long as you're wearing that choker that prevents magic, you can't use magic power."

Akent coldly further said.

“Even adventurers without magic talent would try to use body strengthening for a moment once or twice. That’s why it’s obvious that we’d come up with countermeasures like that. We’ve been hunting people for so many years, y’see.”

Goddammit!
There’s nothing I could do.

I was receiving my just desserts for getting cocky and saying “being an adventurer is easy”.

I never thought of any methods to get out of crises like this.

“We’re going to sell off all of Lute’s things, so will you teach us everything about these magic devices?”

Alcedo waved the AK-47 in his hands.

I glared in defiance with all my might.

“Hey, hey, hurry up and tell us. If we don’t know how to use it, it’ll only sell for cheap.”
“Who would tell you something if he knows you’re gonna sell him.”

“Haa? You still don’t know where you stand, do you?”

Alcedo narrowed his cat eyes.

He stretched his hand towards my tied-up finger.

“Eh……?”

cr——ack

————————！！！

Without any hesitation, he broke my thumb.

“Don’t get carried away you damn brat. You got too spoiled because we went easy on you.”
“AAAAAAH!”

He broke my index finger next.

Again, I sensed cat-ears’ hand reaching toward my middle finger.

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’ll tell, so forgive me!”

My face that had been glaring up until now was saying sorry while covered in tears and mucus.

“You went too far, Alcedo. We’re gonna sell him after this, what if he gets injured.”
“He’ll be fine. If it’s just this kind of injury, he’ll be back to normal once he gets healed by a magician at the slave trader. In fact, should I break his legs too so he doesn’t run away?”
“I’m sorry! I’m sorry! Please stop!”

“Tch, so noisy. Shut up. You only got some fingerbones broken. This is why brats are…. If you understand, quietly listen to what we say.”

Being tch’d at by Akent, I kept my mouth shut and silently nodded.

Alcedo asked the question once again.

“Tell us how to use these magic devices. Misha, take notes.”
“Got it. Wait a bit.”

“If you lie…. you know what happens, right?”

With tears in my eyes, I nodded several times.

Once Misha was ready with the memo, I explained the use of the AK-47 and M10.

"—— aha it's that kind of thing."

I answered everything Alcedo asked while bearing the pain in my fingers.

"So we'll sell the AK-47 and M10, but what about this?"

What Akent held in hand was Snow's engagement bracelet.

"It's not like it's got gems in it, might be made of magic liquid metal. Nothing more than trash. Just throw it away?"
"Right."

Akent nonchalantly threw the engagement bracelet into the fire that was still burning.

(*Goddammit! Goddammit! Goddammit! I'll kill you! I'll definitely survive and kill you!*)

With my insides boiling hotter than magma, I carved their three faces into my brain.

"I'll definitely come back and kill you", I vowed.

"We should break the tag and bury it somewhere here. We can't cash it in at the guild anyways."

Alcedo took one of the two knives at his waist and struck the tag on top of a rock with the handle until it broke.

Akent smiled lightly and raised his heel.

"Well then, go sleep until we sell you to the slave merchant. Or rather, go sleep until you become those perverts' toy."

He drove his heel to the pit of my stomach.
Then I lost consciousness.

Like this, I was sold to the Demon Continent as a slave.

Gun-Ota

- Volume 3 -

Chapter 020 – Demon Continent

Author's Note
After reading 19 chapters of Gun-ota there are some who were worried of it getting a "BL development", "depression", "dark hero", "title fraud", or somesuch, so firstly allow me to say no to that.
Please rest assured that I will not develop the story in that way. Chapter 19 was done in preparation of getting new heroines and weapons, but conversely it became a source of worry. That said, I think we will be welcoming the appearance of a new heroine within the next 3 chapters.

There are 6 continents in this world.
The North Continent, where the White Wolf Clan lives.
The Fairy Human Continent, where the Fairy Races (Elves and suchlike) and Humans live.
The Beast Continent, where the Beast Races live.
Hell Continent, where the Demon Lord is said to still live, sleeping.
The Dragon Continent, where the Dragon Race lives.
And lastly, the Demon Continent, where the Demon Races live.

Putting them roughly, if you put the North Continent at 12 o'clock, the Fairy Human Continent will be at 10 o'clock.
The Beast Continent at 8 o'clock.
Hell Continent at 6 o'clock.
The Dragon Continent at 4 o'clock.
And the Demon Continent at 2 o'clock.

About 1000 years ago there was a war between the union of the Fairy Races, Beast Races, and Humans against the Demon Races.
The cause of the war was discrimination and hatred towards the Demon Races.

The customs of the Demon Continent are very different from that of the Fairy Human Continent or the Beast Continent.

There are many races that can't be distinguished from monsters, like Two-Legged Lizards, Four-Arms, and Centaurs.

The discrimination against the Demon Races (especially against the Demon Races with strange appearances) was deep-rooted at the time, and as a result the war escalated into a worldwide scale.

Though there are some lingering resentment, nowadays discrimination against the demon races is not so openly done, and relations between the continents had cooled down enough to do trade.

As an example of the goods being traded, 'From Demon Continent to Fairy Human Continent' would be minerals like gold, silver, copper, iron, and magic stones. 'From Fairy Human Continent to Demon Continent' would be foodstuffs like sugar, wheat, and so on.

The Fairy Human Continent also exports slaves to work the Demon Continents' ore and coal mines.

I was sitting, hugging my knees in the hold of a ship, together with those coal mine slaves.

There are of course female slaves, but since the male and female quarters are separated there is not much conversation between them.

But I had never even in my wildest dreams ever imagined I'd be sold as a slave.
I was having my just desserts for overly relying in my modern weapons: "whatever happens I'll be fine"———but this is too much for just one failure.

"If I could, I want to smack the me that got too cocky that day…."

But no matter how much I mull over what's past, nothing would change.

I stopped moping over the past, and tried to escape from the ship.
But the ship left no openings to escape.

The ship we were in travelled straight, as if crossing the central sea.
The ship went by way of the Beast, Hell, and Dragon continents, dropping off goods for sale at those continents. Then it picked up new goods to fill the empty space, and went on to the next continent.

Upon reaching each port and exchanging goods, the ship anchored for up to 20 days, letting the sailors rest.

I thought to escape while we were at port, but there was absolutely no chance of that.

Magic prevention chokers were well attached to our necks.
Thanks to that it became impossible to use body strengthening to slip out, if we try to pick the lock without sufficient skill it will cast a fatal spell on us.
It will kill us unless we unlock it with a special key.

The entrance to the ship's hold was constantly manned by 2 sailors, standing guard in shifts.
Even if all the slaves were to tear down the door, the sailors would say the keyword and the chokers would tighten, suffocating all the slaves.

Once we were out at sea, we were allowed to go up on deck.
In fact, we were recommended to get some sun in order to keep us healthy.

Even if we chatted while sunbathing on deck, the sailors won't get abusive or rough us up.
On the contrary, we could get friendly with the sailors and get a share of luxuries like tobacco or booze.

Basically, slaves are treated well.
It seems they don't want our prices to go down because of wounds.

For food, we would mainly get bread twice a day, accompanied by salted meat and something like pickled vegetables.

At first it was hard for me, because of having gotten used to three meals a day.
But once I had gotten used to it, it was no longer distressful.

The number one most inconvenient thing was the rationing of fresh water.
Though they can conjure up fresh water since there's a magician on board, the slaves basically get no more than a washbasin's worth of water a day.

That water is for quenching one's thirst and to clean off dirt on the body.
There are also slaves who, in their longing for water, looked forward to the day they reached the next port.
Especially the female slaves.

After several months of being tossed about on board the slaver ship——somebody called out to me while on deck, out at sea.
It was the slave trader who bought me from the three stooges.

His head was wrapped in a long sheet, forming a Turban. On his feet, not boots – but sandals. And he wore a red vest.

He looked like a merchant from a certain RPG.

Those three had lied to him—telling him that I was a child who was caught committing a crime and was then sold.
My price was 100 gold coins, as they expected.

For that reason I was officially traded off as a slave and if I forcibly break out, I will be chased like a criminal.
Even if I told him I was tricked and sold illegally by those three, it's already too late.
Nobody would believe anything a slave says, anyway, so it's not like he'll listen.

The slave trader held out a textbook about the Demon Continent Language.
It was about the size and thickness of an English textbook.
It was dirty, worn out, and full of fingerprints, maybe because it had been well-used.

The slave trader said,

"Human kids who know the Demon Continent Language sell for a high price, so learn it."
"…….why should I even make an effort to raise my price when there's nothing in it whatsoever for me."
"Of course there's a benefit."
"Are you going to increase my share of fresh water? Or possibly give me better meals? Although I'm not particularly interested in either of those."

I answered with sharp words and a bad attitude.
I'm not the kind of person who'd be civil towards those who'd sell me away as a slave.

The slave trader continued, neither getting angry nor laughing.

"It's not like I need you to learn at all costs. You'd fetch a good price even as you are now."
"? Then why did you tell me to learn?"

Unintentionally, I tilted my head and asked the slave trader back.
To summarize what the slave trader said——

For boys my age, it's almost certain that we will be stationed at a male prostitution house intended for the coal mine slaves taken from the Fairy Human Continent or thereabouts. Later, once we grew up, it seems that we will change roles into the coal mine slaves themselves.
It would be at least 10 years before I could buy myself back.

In reality, I have never heard of children sold off in the same position as me getting liberated from slavery and returning to tell of it.
For the most part, they died.
Whether it be accidents, suicide, or death by overwork…… they died in all sorts of ways, but they all ended up the same way.

However, those that had learned the language have a high chance of becoming lovers for the wealthy people, in other words, ladies with money and time to spare, of the Demon Continent.

Demons have a relatively long lifespan compared to humans.
So there are lots of ladies with a mostly young appearance.
They'd get three meals a day, nap time, and beds.
There is also a higher chance of them being released from slavery once they get older, compared to coal mine slaves.

"But if you don't want to study there's nothing I can do about it. There's no need for the Demon Language book either."
"What are you talking about, master! I'll do my best to learn the language and fetch a high price!"

I bowed my back in confusion, grabbing on to the slave trader's clothes who had turned back on me.

"——Wouldn't it have been better if you had just honestly said that from the beginning. Here. The book. Take good care of it."

The slave trader sighed and gave me the textbook.
I received the book with both hands.

"Call me once you're finished with the basics. I'll have a sailor who knows the Demon Language help with conversation practice."
"Yes! Thank you very much! Later – I will give my best efforts to talk!

Ever since that day, I frantically started making every effort to learn the Demon Language.
Because I absolutely don't want to end up at a male prostitution house.

In my previous life, English wasn't really my strong subject, my grades weren't that good either.
But it seems that humans can really learn when the need comes and they are driven into a corner.
I smoothly learned the language, quite like a fish in water.

I finished the basics about half a year after I got the Demon Language book from the slave trader.
After that I did lots of practice conversations in the Demon Language.
Thanks to that I became able to hold a normal conversation without a problem, though my writing was still poor.

Then, one year after I departed from maritime city Grey.
I was brought along from the Fairy Human Continent to the Demon Continent.

Chapter 021 - Rano Slave House

We were brought down from the ship for the first time in a year.

There were magic prevention chokers on our necks, and chains on our hands and feet.

It was night time.
The sky was covered in thick clouds.
It feels like it was going to rain, but people at the port continued their work without any indication of preparing for rain.

I could see the city across from the harbor warehouse, illuminated by a myriad of lights.
“Get on the wagon in a line. The men get in first. The women get on the wagon that’s coming from behind.”

An iron wagon covered with gratings pulled by 4 healthy horned horses rolled up before me.
I was promptly shoved inside the grated wagon, not even given the chance to enjoy the feeling of being on land.

We did as we were told without resisting and got in, 20 to a wagon.
The door was closed from outside, it was something that wouldn’t open from the inside.

The carriage does not shake much, considering the open ground it’s passing over.
Looking outside the grated windows, it looks like we’re headed for the port town.
Then we were transported on the wagon for about an hour.

“……Looks like we’re here.”

The wagon went around to the back of a 5-floor building.
There was a signboard posted on the building, it said “Rano Slave House” in the Demon Language.

As the wagon stopped, the sound of a door being opened was heard from outside.
When the door opened, over 10 men came out to see us.
They were all wearing leather armor and were armed with swords and spears.

But what’s more impressive is that all of them are of the Demon Race.
Two-legged lizard race, one-eyed race, bird race with wings for arms—these men who could be mistaken for monsters at first glance were standing in line.

They were probably the soldiers employed by the “Rano Slave House”.
At the end of the path created between the standing soldiers, there were stairs leading to the building’s basement.

“Once you get down from the wagon, continue straight down to the basement.”

One of the private soldiers making the path, a skinhead with twisted horns growing out of his forehead, said so.
He seems to be the leader who is managing these private soldiers.

The slaves including me went down the stairs toward the basement without any resistance.

From behind, the sound of another wagon coming could be heard. Then, new footsteps came down into the basement.

The basement is of simple make, but it was wider than I thought, and it felt pleasantly cool to walk on with bare feet.

Lamps hung from the ceiling at even intervals.
But they were not firelight.
It seems that some kind of magic is used to provide light.

The first room that we were led to was the bathroom.
The horned man who seemed like the soldiers' leader caught up with us, and showed us the bathroom.

"Now clean off all the dirt you got on the journey."

The dressing room was about 18 tatami in size.

The bathroom was about the size of two classrooms, there was plenty of hot water inside long boxes the size of bathtubs.
Three of them had been prepared.

"Take off your clothes here. We'll give you a towel and soap to wash your head and body. Use the hot water as you like. Let us know if you're out of water, we'll get you some more. Just don't dip inside like nobleman do. The water's for everyone's use after all."

As instructed, we got a towel, some soap, and a bucket and went into the bathroom.
There were 40 people washing, me included.

Hot water ran down my head for the first time in about a year.
It's unfortunate that I can't get in the tub, but it felt good just to get a bath.
I once again filled the bucket with water and got my towel drenched.

I foamed the soap prepared for me using the towel, and washed off the dirt I had accumulated during the journey.
Soap was supposed to be a valuable commodity in this world.
Yet, the Slave House let the slaves use it freely.

Once I had gotten out of the bath, I was given new clothes.
I wrung the towel and dried my head, then took the clothes.
The shirt and trousers weren't new, but they were cleanly washed.

"Those who have gotten out of the bath go to the dining hall. It's at the end of the hall, going inside from the bathroom."

Barefooted, I did as indicated and continued inside.

At the end of the hall there was a large room—the dining hall.
It was about the size of four classrooms.
A simple but delicious looking meal, consisting of a steaming soup with lots of beans inside, thick cuts of meats, and fried vegetables, was set on long tables roughly made of wood.

An old lady spoke out from behind the counter in a halting Fairy Human Language.

“Bean soup! Free seconds! Eat all you like!”

It goes without saying, the slaves made an astonished sound.

Sitting on the long benches, everyone ate their fill of the long-desired extravagant meal.

As we finished our meals, we went out of the dining room, and turned right.
There was a large room inside.
Beds are spread out inside the room.
It seems like we’re going to sleep here.

But once I laid down on it, the futon smelled of sunlight.
I had a full belly after so long.
When I closed my eyes, wrapped in the futon that smelled of the sun, the weariness from the journey caught up with me and I immediately fell asleep.

I heard from the old lady at the dining hall the next day (in the Demon Language, of course)—generally, the people who were sold as slaves were in despair over their own future.
The despair of those brought through a long journey from the Fairy Human Continent on the other side of the world from the Demon Continent was particularly severe.
So on the day they arrived, they were given hot water baths, food to eat until they were full, and beds to sleep in.
By doing that most people’s hearts would calm down.

It seems that because of the warm hospitality the slaves received when they arrived at the port, the number of slaves that committed suicide out of despair or made an uproar in an attempt to escape dropped sharply.

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The next day, we had breakfast in the same dining hall as last night's dinner.
Soup filled with beans, bean salad.
Why are they all beans……?

At about noon, the horned guy called all the men except me, and they all went out of the basement one after the other.

It was decided that they were to be sold as miners to the mines at the interior of the Demon Continent. That's why they were immediately taken along the following day.
It seems that they were sold at 20~50 gold coins each.

I was a human child, and I could hold an ordinary conversation in the Demon Language.
I can also use simple magic, so it seems that they got in touch with some rich person so they can sell me at a high price.
I was to be sold at about 200~300 gold coins. If I were a girl I could get an even higher price—so the soldiers' leader horned guy explained.

That's about 10 times the price of the miners!
A large cask of magic liquid metal was about 100 gold, so that's a considerable amount of money.

Other than slaves, the ship also brings in various goods from other continents.
When they went to return to the Fairy Human Continent, they bought Demon Continent slaves, and packed the holds with minerals and suchlike and continued to the other continents.

It was a business with high return, even though there's a risk of losing their assets due to the ship getting sunk.

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"Lute, your buyer is coming."
"….. really?"

It was the fifth night I stayed at the Rano Slave House.
When I was having my dinner at the dining hall, the soldier leader horned guy seated across from me…….Obukhov, nonchalantly talked to me.

He spoke in fluent Fairy Human Continent language and it seems he is the leader of the private army in the Rano Slave Market.
Maybe because he had free time because the miners were no longer here and he didn't have to be so vigilant, the horned guy had been calling me out to talk in the Demon Language. Because of my studies, I was able to hold a normal conversation. I learned the horned guy's name during one of the conversations.

Obukhov continued his talk while scooping up the bean soup with a spoon.

"It seems they'll come pick you up tomorrow."
"Err… may I ask what kind of person they are? Maybe their gender."
"Sorry, that was a bad way of putting it. It seems we got hold of a buyer candidate. So, we don't know the details."

He swallowed the beans in his mouth without so much as chewing them.
Obukhov didn't say any more than that, and went about his meal.

Even though just a candidate, a buyer's finally here, huh….
If the buyer is a perverted guy who likes little boys, I'll kill myself.

(*—No, even if I were bought by a perverted guy, even if I wound up at a male brothel, I won't give up, I'll survive and go back to the Fairy Human Continent where Snow is!*)

Absolutely, whatever it takes!

…… but in the end, rather than getting bought by a guy, it's better if it were a beautiful lady!
In my previous life, I remained a virgin until I died.
If you include my 11 years of life after I was born again, I was over 30 years old. If my first time was with a man, and through my back door, that would be too awful!

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The next day, in the morning—I was brought from the basement to the top floor, with Obukhov and a private soldier in front and behind me.

My hands were bound with a pair of handcuffs.
A 1 meter long chain was attached to my feet, so I could not move so quickly.
As always, there was a magic prevention choker on my neck.

It was impossible to run away with a child's body and no magic.

Rano Slave House, 5th floor.
I was brought into an extravagant room.
It was probably a customer reception room.

Leather sofa, table made of insect shells, thick desk.
There were no windows, but there were plants arranged, and paintings of scenery hanging on the walls instead.
There were also other fine furnishings laid out in a calculated manner.

Inside the room, a two-legged frog demon I don't remember seeing stood up from the leather seat behind the desk and offered his hand for a handshake.

"You've been having it hard up to now. I am the manager of Rano Slave House, Rano Merumeru, of the Frog Race. Nice to meet you Lute."
"T, thanks."

As I returned his handshake, I was surprised at the lack of moisture on his hand.

As you can see from his name, this frog seems to be the head of Rano Slave House.

"Don't be so stiff. I'm not one to eat human children."

Rano saw the look on my face, and made his cheeks swell amusingly.

It looks like he was mistaken for a monster because of how he looked, and frightened human kids many times.
Rano asked me to sit on the sofa.

“Do you want anything to drink? There’s nothing but scented tea right now, of course children would want fruit juice, I wonder?”
“No, I don’t mind.”
“Is that so? Then please sit and wait, the customer who might want to buy Lute is being taken here. Obukhov and the soldier leave the room and wait in front of the door.”
“”Yes !””

Obukhov and the soldier tagged behind Rano and left the room.
I was left alone in the room.

I looked around the room once again.
There were no windows.
Obukhov was waiting in front of the door, which was the only way out of here.

(Don’t rush. The chance to slip away will surely come!)

While inside the Slave House, the defenses were too strong so there was no chance to escape. But there might be one after I was bought.
Rather than giving the buyer a cause to be wary, it’s better to be obedient and look for an opening.

The only thing I can do now is to silently pray that my buyer is a woman.
Sitting in the sofa, I put my elbows on my knees and pressed my hands together.

“Dear God, dear Buddha, dear Tenjin! Please let my buyer be a woman, please let my buyer be a woman, please let my buyer be a woman, please let my buyer be a woman, please let my buyer be a woman—”

While I was making my most earnest prayers, previous life included, I heard the sound of the door being knocked upon.
The first one to enter was the frog, Rano.
Behind him, my prospective buyer came in.

Rano somewhat pridefully introduced me.

“This is Lute. How is he, unusual, right? A human child with black hair and eyes. He can also speak the Demon Language, though only for normal conversation. We rarely get human children this wonderful, you know.”

“Hahaha! He is certainly rare! Hello Lute-kun! You have a lovely name!”

The one who entered is a————man.

But he’s not just any man.
He was wearing expensive looking clothes, but he was extremely tall. Easily two and a half meters.
Furthermore, he had well developed muscles like a bodybuilder, and black skin.

He had a moustache over his thick lips that looked like that of a cod. He also had thick eyebrows, and his blonde hair was hardened in a swept-back do.

This muscled monster man standing in front of me looked to be my prospective buyer.

The clip of a camellia flower falling down was played in an endless loop inside my head.

Chapter 022 - Misunderstanding

Lute, age 11.

Hello, this is Lute, formerly Hotta Youta.

I got carried away and became an adventurer all by myself, then got tricked and was sold as a slave. Tehe~☆

And now, a man who would be the one to purchase me was right in front of my eyes.

But he's not just any man.

He was wearing clothes worn by noblemen I saw at the Fairy Human Continent, but he was unusually tall. Easily two and a half meters.

Furthermore, he had well-developed muscles like a bodybuilder, also, his skin was black.

Even now, his clothes looked like they're about to burst apart, he had a overflowing beard, lips that were thick like a cod roe, bushy eyebrows and golden hair was combed in a 'all back' manner.

This muscled monster man looks to be my potential buyer.

I tightened my ass.

Ah, my chastity is in danger!?

(…. Hey!? Now is not the time for escapism! Besides, he's only my "potential" buyer! It's quite possible he'll refuse!)

While silently praying “refuse, refuse”, I observed the conversation between Rano Slave House manager Rano and the muscled daruma.

ED: gender is indeterminate when referring to lute for a reason
“It’s become thin after a long journey, but there is no problem whatsoever with it’s health.”

“The skin certainly looks healthy. I don’t think there’s any worry about sickness, either!”

“Of course. This company always aims to provide the best of goods. It’s age is 11. It’s gender—.”

“All right, I’ll buy it! 350 gold coins, right!”

(That was fast!)

The price is also 50 gold coins higher than expected.

Rano probably intended to overcharge, and force a sale by making a discount at the appropriate moment.

But, to the one who was making snap decisions, he raised his voice to stop him.

“U, uhh, there are still things I need to explain.”

“Hahahahaha! Since he’s one that you recommended, there shouldn’t be a problem! You just take the money from this pouch!”

The muscled daruma laughed heartily and handed over a leather bag full of gold to Rano.

“T, thank you very much m’lord count. I’ve prepared the contract, so please look over it and if there are no problems, please sign at the bottom.”

“Uh huh.”

The muscled daruma received the contract, sat in a sofa opposite of me, and ran his eyes over the contract.

Meanwhile, Rano took 350 gold coins from the pouch handed to him.

The muscled daruma finished reading the contract and finally put down his signature.

Rano confirmed the contract and gave a deep bow.

“Thank you very much for your purchase, m’lord count”

“As am I, for the excellent goods! Tell me if you come across good slaves again!”

“As you wish, m’lord will be notified first whenever I do so.”

As muscled daruma finished his handshake with Rano, he turned to me and offered his hand.

“Best regards from now on, Lute! I am Count Dan Gate Vlad! Of the honourable rulers of the night, the Vampire Race!”

“N, nice to meet you. M’lord count…… I am Lute, a human.”

“Don’t be so tense! Hahahahahahaha!”

“Ha, hahahaha……”

My hand was grasped with a strength that made me think it had gotten crushed.

It looks like it was normal power for him, even Rano’s hand was red.

“Well then, I will perform a temporary contract.”

Rano took something that looked like a rectangular seal from his desk.

He pressed that thing on my right shoulder.

“-Ksst!?”

It felt like I was pricked with countless needles.

When the seal was removed, a tattoo-looking magic crest was left on my shoulder.

“With this, the temporary servant contract is complete. If a proper contract is not made within 5 days, it will be voided and his rights will be transferred over back to us. Please keep in mind that we cannot make a full repayment if that happens. We will give you a backup contract and contract seal together with Lute.

“Then I’ll leave it to you. Since I’ll be heading back, you can send him over once the preparations are complete!”

“Certainly. We’ve been greatly helped by the Count this time, so we’ll include some goods free of charge. Please look forward to it at your mansion.”

“Hahahahahaha! I’ll be looking forward to it! Well then Lute! See you later at my mansion!”

The Count left with laughter.

The pressure in the room immediately dropped.

I asked Rano while rubbing my shoulder.

“U, um, what’s a provisional contract?”

“It’s a contract temporarily created to prevent claims like ‘They died soon after buying them!’, or ‘I was cheated!’. You see, sometimes there are slave traders that misrepresent the slaves’ health or life span. Ordinarily, the curse mark will be affixed on the same day as the contract agreement, so even if I don’t worry about it, it’ll be OK.

So a warranty period or cooling off time.

“These are the service goods for the Count and farewell gifts for Lute from me. You can put it on tonight after the contract is signed. It’s important to leave a good impression after all, even if just a little.”

I was given a paper bag.

When I looked inside—there was a black bikini thong, garter belt, and bra inside.

As I thought, I was bought for that purpose…….

With my face turning blue in despair, I thanked Rano for now.

“……Thank you very much.”

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I was currently in the basement.

I took a bath and changed for newly-washed clothes.

I was taken to the dining hall, where food had been prepared.

It takes half a day to get the count’s mansion by carriage, so it’s recommended to depart by noon.

Of course, in my despair I had lost all appetite.

The bean soup that was usually rather delicious now tasted like drinking muddy water.

I said my farewells to the old lady at the dining hall and everyone, then went up the stairs.

A coach had already been prepared in front of the basement door, and Obukhov and the soldier that led me up to the 5th floor reception room were already on alert.

“I’ll release your cuffs before you get on the coach.”

Obukhov took a bunch of keys and released the shackles on my hands and feet.

I thought that this might be my chance, but the magic prevention choker was not taken off.

The other soldier gripped my shoulder hard, so it’s impossible to force my way out. I obediently did as they say.

The coach, of course, had steel grates. It was a small coach for 4 people.

It was locked from outside and cannot be opened from the inside.

Obukhov and the soldier rode at the driver’s seat, and used a whip on the two horned horses.

The coach I was placed on slowly started moving.

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After being shaken for half a day since before noon, we arrived at the Count’s castle.

The castle was made of stone, it was rather high but also wide. The castle walls were so high that I needed to look up to see the top, it felt as though ivy had been growing there for many years. There was also this tower that gave off a feeling that a princess was held captive within.

It was indeed a castle for vampires to live in.

We passed through the gate and went through a long garden.

There was a large water fountain right in the middle of the road, water sprayed out beautifully from calculated points.

The coach circled around the water fountain and continued.

As the coach reached the front door, I was brought down.

There were two figures at the front door.

One of them was an old man wearing a tailcoat.

He was short in stature, about the same as me, who was a child. Two curved horns grew out from underneath his gray hair, and there were hooves like on a goat or a sheep on the tips of his toes that popped out of his trousers.

There was an almost 2 meter tall beastman standing beside him.

From the looks of him, he was like a wolf that walked on two legs.

One of his ears was torn off, …His furry body was forged from such intense training, that an intense physique that had all its extraneous fats stripped away from his body, was revealed. His face and body had numerous scars that couldn't be hidden. wheee

Obukhov let me down from the coach.

"We brought the human Lute, a slave bought by Count Dan Gate Vlad from the Rano Slave House. These are the copies of the contract documents and the seal used for the actual contract. Please confirm."

"We've been waiting for you. Well then, excuse me—no problem. Thank you for the delivery baa~."

The old man wearing tailcoats took the documents and said his thanks.

Obukhov and the soldier bowed their heads, boarded the coach, and went back the way we came.

I, who was left alone, gazed uneasily at the two.

The first one to talk was the old man.

“Nice to meet you Lute. My name is Merry, from the Demon Race, Sheepman clan, working at the Vlad house as head butler. If there’s something you don’t understand, don’t hesitate to tell me baa~.”

“L, looking forward to working with you.”

I shook his hand that was presented to me.

His name is Merry because he’s a sheep, and he attaches “baa~” at the end of his sentences…… so simple.

“This is the head of the guards in charge of the defense of this castle, Gigi, of the beast race, wolf clan. He was formerly a slave, so if anything troubles you, feel free to consult with him baa~.”

“… … … …”

“L, looking forward to working with you.”

I gave Gigi a bow and he twitched his nose 2, 3 times and silently nodded.

He looked just like a wolf walking on two legs, so even when being silent he was intense.

Scaaaaaaaryyy!

I can’t possibly feel free to consult with hiiiiiiiim!

“This may be sudden, but the master and madam have been expecting you. Please make preparations to meet him right now baa~”

“Please come this way,” he said, and I entered the castle.

I walked inside the castle, sandwiched between Merry and Gigi.

“By the way, I’ve been wondering but what is that you’re holding in your hand baa~?”

“To please the master, the slave merchant gave me these underwear. The black translucent one is quite erotic. Ahahaha…”

When Merry heard my story, he stopped walking and turned his head.

“Oh dear, why is a set of black underwear needed to please master? Did you not hear anything from master baa~?”

“Hear what, exactly?”

“…From your look, it seems like you haven’t been told yet baa~”

“I, I’m sorry.”

“No no. Master is someone who doesn’t mind the small details, just as he looks, I’m sure he just neglected to explain to you. Firstly, Master already has Madam. So, there’s no need for Lute to have any strange worries baa~.”

T, thank goodnesssssssss!

It looks like I wasn’t bought to become that muscled daruma’s plaything.

Hearing what Merry said, my tension loosened all at once.

What a relief! Really, I’m relieved!

But then…. if that’s true, then why did he buy me for such a large sum of money, 350 gold coins?

Driven by curiosity, I asked Merry.

“Umm, then why did he buy me?”

“You were bought to take care of and become a blood bag for ojou-sama, who’s having her 10th birthday baa~.”

“B, blood bag!?”

My face paled, once again falling from heaven to hell.

(No matter how you think of it, a blood bag is like, food, right?)

Vampire food I remembered from the vampire movies I watched on Nichiyou Youga Gekijou in my previous life.

Merry corrected the misunderstanding involving splatters in my head.

“Rest at ease. It won’t be something horrible like Lute is imagining right now baa~.”

Then Merry continued explaining about the vampire family.

“There is a custom among vampires that they would gain a taste for blood on their 10th birthday. For the rich ones with the means to do so, employing a steward that doubles as a blood bag is a kind of status symbol. But still, for vampires, blood, along with scented tea and black tea are luxury items. They only suck a little blood, they won’t suck until you die, so you can relax baa~.”

I stroked my chest once again.

If it’s only a little bit then I’ll be fine.

After finishing his explanation, Merry stopped just in front of a room.

“Well then, a change of clothes had been prepared inside, tell me once you’ve finished changing. We will first go greet master and madam, then we will go see ojou-sama together with master and madam. So please get changed as quickly as possible baa~.”

“Understood.”

I went inside the room.

The room is a 6-tatami room.

There was only the minimum necessary furniture; a simple bed, desk and chair.

On the bed, for some reason, a maid uniform was folded and stacked.

“Why does a guy like me have to wear a maid uniform……”

Merry said that I was going to be ojou-sama’s caretaker, doubling as a blood bag.

She’s a lady. So do I have to wear maid clothes because she couldn’t relax with boys around?

Then they should’ve bought a girl from the beginning.

Or maybe ojou-sama has a hobby of putting boys in maid clothes…….

In that case, what an interest for someone who’s turning 10 years old.

But compared to becoming a male prostitute for another man, being made to wear girls’ clothes is 10 billion times better.

I quickly put on the classic maid uniform.

Once I finished changing, I went out to the hallway where Merry and Gigi were waiting.

With their lead, I went towards the room where the Count and Madam were waiting.

Count Dan who I met at the slave house was sitting relaxedly on a sofa, drinking scented tea prepared by a maid with hamster ears.

The beautiful-looking lady sitting beside him was probably the madam.

Her blonde hair flowed to her hips, going past the sleeves of an expensive looking dress. … Her cleavage is plentiful and it felt like it was sucking me into it, and her waist was so thin that one worried whether her organs were there.

She had a beautiful appearance, it's unthinkable that she had a 10-year old daughter.

There was nobody with such a beautiful figure like her even among Hollywood actresses in my previous life.

The Count noticed us, and vigorously stood up with a smile.

"Hahahahaha! It suits you well, Lute! What do you think, Seras? My eyes weren't wrong, right!"

"Yes, as expected of darling. You bought such a cute-looking child!"

"Fuwaa! Wai, er….!"

Madam immediately approached me, and hugged me into her valley without hesitation.

Madam had a tall stature, and I was still a child, so my face was buried in the valley between her huge breasts.

Ooooooooooooo! Booobs soooooooft!

They also smelled sweet in a different way to Snow.

I spontaneously brought my hips close.

Perhaps misunderstanding a male's psychological phenomenon, the madam let go of my hand and released me from the valley.

I still wanted my face buried between those huge breasts.

“Ara, sorry, I put in a bit too much strength because you were so cute. Nice to see you, Lute. I am Seras Gate Vlad, of the Demon Race, Vampire Clan.”

“Nice to meet you madam Seras. I am Lute, human.”

I shook hands with madam.

The Count started talking with a hearty laughter.

“Hahahahahaha! Lute, you look very good in maid clothes! But is it too tight or too big?”

“No, it’s just the right size.”

“Really really.”

“But, why do I—.”

“Hahahahahaha! Well then, shall we go see our daughter!”

My words were interrupted by the Count’s laughter.

Count Dan started walking on his own while laughing.

The head butler Merry was somehow already at the entrance, and opened the door.

“That’s right, we should soon introduce Lute to her.”

Madam also happily took my hand and left the room.

Madam’s hand was soft and warm.

We headed towards the second floor.

In front of a pair of large double doors there were the Count, Madam, me, Merry, Gigi, and the maid who prepared tea, lined up in that order.

“We’re coming in, Chrisse!”

The Count called out, but opened the door without knocking.

The room had heavy curtains inside, blocking the light from the stars.

The only source of light was the lamp beside the canopy bed.

The Count’s and Madam’s only daughter was sitting on the bed, staring at us.

A small stature.

Her golden hair was spread out on the white sheets.

Her large eyes with long eyelashes seemed frightened like a small animal, and started to become teary.

Her skin was white and smooth like marble, but was not unhealthy like a sick person.

The fangs that peeked from her red lips seemed slightly longer than humans of her age.

But other than that, rather than a vampire, it seemed more proper to call her an angel that had fallen to earth and became frightened.

The girl who was to be my master was a feeble, beautiful girl, who strangely roused my protective instincts.

“Hahahahahahaha! Happy birthday Chrisse! This guy is a birthday present from papa and mama…. your blood bag Lute!”

I was gently pushed by madam, and gave my greetings.

“Nice to meet you ojou-sama. I am Lute, from now on I’ll be taking care of you and doubling as your blood bag. Please treat me well.”

“How’s she, isn’t she a very cute and nice girl? I’m sure Chrisse will soon grow to like her.”

Madam, too, started talking to her with a smile.

The girl called Chrisse, took out a small blackboard. Ran her fingers over it, and wrote.

Then she turned the mini blackboard towards everyone.

“Thank you for the birthday present, Father, Mother, but—.”

She erased the words, and once again ran her fingers over it.

“Why is a boy wearing maid clothes?”

Everyone’s eyes simultaneously pointed at me.

“…… boys are scary.”

Chrisse ojou-sama left the last words on the mini blackboard, grabbed the feather quilt and hid herself in its shadows.

Chapter 023 – Terms of Employment

Count Dan's daughter, Chrisse Gate Vlad was a hikikomori.

Both her parents were magicians over B+ rank.

However, she had no talent as a magician.

When they turned 7, the kids of well-to-do Demon Continent families started going to school. There, they learn to read and write, do arithmetic, and learn history.

When they turned 10, those with talent went to magic schools.

Those without talent went to schools of general education.

The bullying began when Chrisse ojou-sama was 9 years old.

When they turned 9, the classes for those who would go on to a magic school and those who won't were separated as preparation.

Chrisse ojou-sama was put in a separate class from her 3 close childhood friends. She alone was put in a class for general education.

Three months later—she stopped coming to school because of bullying.

The cause of the bullying was…. because in spite of both her parents having talent in magic, Chrisse ojou-sama did not inherit that talent.

Then, because her three friends had talent, she was separated from them and became alone.

The stage for her bullying was set.

After that, Chrisse ojou-sama became afraid of light and the world outside, even now when she's 10 years old she hadn't taken one step outside her room.

Her room was furnished with a bath, toilet, and kitchen. They were specially constructed after that fact.

My head hurt from Master and Madam's sweetness.

I understood the ojou-sama's pain. But why didn't they try to get her outside, and allow her to live inside as a hikikomori……

But they themselves were of course not okay with how Chrisse ojou-sama was currently shutting herself in.

It seems that I was bought as a caretaker and blood bag as one of their efforts.

Unlike people in the Fairy Human Continent, those in the Demon Continent celebrate birthdays every year until they were 15.

At 15 they were considered adults.

It's like a high school kid graduating from getting christmas presents.

Then, on the day of her 10th birthday, they thought to start with getting her a blood bag as a present, they met the slave trader and he recommended me.

Master liked me at first sight and bought me without haggling—he mistook me for a girl.

Certainly, after a year on the ship, my hair had grown to my chin, and I was almost always at my cabin so my skin was white. My muscles had weakened and my arms had become slender like a girl's.

If I had to say it, my looks are young and girly.

If that was the case, it probably couldn't be helped if she misunderstood and I didn't say anything.

Master, Madam, me, Merry, Gigi, and the maid left Chrisse ojou-sama's room and went back to the room where we drank scented tea.

"Hahahahahaha! You looked so cute, so I thought you were a girl for sure! You got me there! Hahahahaha!"

"Oh you, always such a scatterbrain."

Master and Madam laughed cheerfully as if they just went to a comedy show.

I endured the aching in my head and asked.

"But how could Chrisse ojou-sama immediately tell that I'm a boy? Even though nobody here did."

Madam answered my question.

"Vampires move and see better in the dark, you see. That girl has good eyesight, even among us. So she probably could judge at a glance that even when wearing maid clothes, you had the body of a boy instead of a girl.

The head butler Merry bowed his head and apologized.

"I checked the documents again, and it was certainly written 'male' in the gender column. It was my fault for not confirming baa~."

"Hahahahahaha! It's all right, it's all right! It was my fault for immediately buying him at the shop without checking in the first place!"

"…… I could tell from the smell from the start."

"Eeeeh!?"

I spontaneously shrieked in surprise.

It was the first time I heard Gigi talk.

As I feared, he had a low voice like a yakuza.

Merry knitted his eyebrows at Gigi's late remark.

"Then why didn't you tell me immediately baa~."

"Because you didn't ask."

"So Gigi-san, you couldn't do a job unless you were told to baa~?"

"I don't do jobs outside of my charge. It usually causes problems."

Gigi answered Merry's sarcastic remarks without changing his expression.

The two glared at each other for a while.

The Madam changed the atmosphere that had gotten sour.

"Merry, Gigi, that's enough of your quarrel. There's no use fighting over what's past. What we must think about for the time being is what we'll do with Lute, is it not?"

"That's right. I have behaved disgracefully in front of Master and Madam, I am very sorry baa~."

"……."

Merry bowed his head deeply in apology, but Gigi just crossed his arms in silence.

Everyone's eyes were once again pointed at me because of what Madam said.

If I were returned to the slave house, there was a high chance of me being bought as a male prostitute next time.

I'd rather stay here and become Chrisse ojou-sama's caretaker and blood bag, compared to that.

My employers the Count and Madam don't seem to be the type to treat slaves coldly.

This is such an ideal place for me.

That much I can affirm.

Because I didn't want to be returned to the slave house, I frantically made my appeal.

"Please. Let me work here some way or another! I'll do my best as a blood bag to open up ojou-sama's heart!"

"I am very sorry but I must object. Having a boy attached to ojou-sama is…. Firstly, ojou-sama is afraid of Lute. It's possible that her symptoms will become increasingly worse because of him baa~."

"I'll approve. In fact, he should be taking care of ojou-sama because he's a boy."

Gigi directly opposed Merry's opinion.

Merry was surprised and hastily questioned him.

"Gigi-san, do you really think so!? Did you not see how frightened the ojou-sama was baa~!"

"That's why I think it needs to be done. Ojou-sama already had female friends her age. It won't mean anything to add another female friend her age. But something might happen if she got a male friend."

"Gigi-san……"

The unsociable, scary faced Gigi-san with one ear torn off.

I was shaking deep inside.

But he now looked like an angel with a pair of white wings growing out of his back.

Merry calmed down his emotions and coughed once.

“I understand what Gigi-san’s thinking. It’s all the more reason we should return Lute for now and look for another slave with the right requirements, is it not? The slave we buy is going to be stationed at the ojou-sama’s side. We should take utmost care in choosing baa~.”

The head butler Merry wanted to return me.

The head guard Gigi wanted me to stay.

I don’t know who had jurisdiction here, but I wished that Gigi-san’s opinion would be heard.

Actually Merry, I’m gonna make you into grilled mutton one day so be ready for it!

Having finished their quarrel, Merry and Gigi’s eyes were turned to their master, the Count.

“Humm, I’ll take into mind what you two said. So in that case I’ll do both, I’ll have Lute take care of Chrisse for 3 days starting tomorrow, if he does well as a blood bag in that time I’ll keep him! If not I’ll send him back!”

“Will it be alright? It would be difficult to get repayment for goods that were returned just at the end of the provisional period, and not even half the price will be returned baa~.”

“Hahahahahahaha! I don’t mind! It was my mistake in the first place! If I don’t even give Lute a chance then this gentleman’s name will be sullied!”

“Good for you Lute. Do your best and be Chrisse’s blood bag.”

“T, thank you very much! Master! Madam!”

I vigorously bowed my head.

It had conditions attached, but it looks like I got a chance to stay with the Vlad family.

Now I'll do what it takes to please the ojou-sama, I'll let her suck my blood!

Still wearing the maid uniform, I became motivated and tightened my hand in a fist.

The Count and Madam watched me with a pleasant smile, Merry was dissatisfied, and Gigi and the maid watched with no expression.

Thus the fateful three days, that will decide whether or not I could stay at the Vlad house, begins!

Chapter 024 - Day 1 : Pudding

“*ya~wn*”

The first day, morning.

I woke up on a soft bed.

In a room 10 square meters in size.

This is my private room, though only temporarily.

What hung on the wall were not maid clothes, but butler clothes.

It was given to me yesterday by Merry the sheep.

It seems that I had become his subordinate, an apprentice butler attached to ojou-sama.

“…… my terms of employment are that I have to get ojou-sama to suck my blood within these 3 days.”

If I couldn’t do that, then I would be returned to the slave house.

If I were returned to the slave house, I might be sold as a male prostitute next time.

“I have to do my best to get friendly with Chrisse ojou-sama so that doesn’t happen!”

I got up from the bed, full of motivation.

I changed into the butler clothes, and when I left the basement the hamster-eared maid was already waiting.

“G, good morning, Mercè-san”

“Good morning, Lute.”

This girl who was expressionless at first glance was the Vlad house’s head maid, Mercè, from the beast race, hamster clan.

Wearing a traditional maid uniform, she had her hands crossed in front of her.

She had small breasts, and a slender, tall body.

At a glance she looked the part of a capable maid.

“Sorry, it looks like I kept you waiting.”

“No, I had just gotten here, so please don’t mind it.”

Mercè spoke disinterestedly, her expression unchanging.

“Well then, since Lute is going to be taking care of Chrisse ojou-sama for three days from now on, you will be working with me.”

“Looking forward to working with you.”

She was the maid who had been looking after ojou-sama until now.

Which is why I was working as her helper for taking care of ojou-sama.

Also, Mercè was positioned as my overseer.

The one who decided that was the butler Merry.

Merry presented me with a few conditions.

- In order to not leave ojou-sama alone with a man, Mercè will be there to oversee.

- Always do what Mercè instructs.
- If I couldn't become ojou-sama's blood bag, I will be driven out with no sympathy.
- Obey any other, additional terms obediently.

Those were the 4 conditions.

Because she was going to oversee me, and moreover she hardly showed any facial expressions, I didn't really know how to handle her.

She had the air of a demon mother-in-law or an office lady that would run her finger on a window frame and say "is this what you call cleaning?" once I was done with cleaning.

But contrary to my negative image of her, Mercè—

"I agree with Gigi-san's opinion. I think something might change if Lute, who is similar in age, stays by her side. So do your best so you can stay. I'll be rooting for you."

"Thank you very much! Mercè-san!"

Who was I calling a demon mother-in-law or office lady?

Mercè-san is an angel!

At her urging, I started walking.

"Then let's firstly wake ojou-sama up. Since I'll be helping with ojou-sama's morning preparations, please go to the kitchen and fetch her breakfast in the meantime. Do you know where the kitchen is?"

"Yes, I think I'll be alright."

"If you don't know just ask any servant."

"Understood."

While having that conversation, we finally arrived at ojou-sama's room.

Mercè-san knocked the door.

"Ojou-sama, excuse us."

"Excuse us."

Without waiting for ojou-sama's answer, Mercè opened the door and went inside.

I followed along timidly behind her.

A sweet scent typical of girls tickled my nose.

The room was dark.

Thick curtains draped the windows.

The bedside lamp was put out, the only source of light came from outside the doors.

I looked around the room once again.

The room was rather spacious, about 2 classrooms in size.

It was decorated with plants, thick carpets where your feet would sink down to the ankle, a dresser, desk, table, sofa, clothing rack, plushies, and accessories made out of real glittering gems. Inside the room there were more rooms: a bath, toilet, and a kitchen.

It seems that the Count has spent money to make a room perfect for a hikikomori.

I shouldn't be saying this as a former hikikomori—but the thought of "You should've used it to set your daughter on the right path" didn't escape my mind.

“Chrisse ojou-sama, it’s morning. Please get up.”

Mercè-san called out to ojou-sama in the middle of the canopy bed buried in a thick feather quilt.

Her golden hair spread on the bed, the innocent-faced ojou-sama breathed steadily as she slept.

Her slightly reddened cheeks seemed soft, I was driven to poke her with my finger.

The sight of a child rolled up like a ball on a bed that could fit three adults and then some was rather cute.

“Ojou-sama, please get up.”

「…… ！ ？」

……?!

When Mercè-san shook her shoulders, she finally opened her eyes.

But when I entered her vision, she widened her drowsy eyes as big as they could be in surprise.

She immediately covered her head with her quilt again.

Ojou-sama threw an uneasy glance at me, obviously on alert.

Mercè-san introduced me in order to dispel her wariness.

“This is the apprentice butler Lute who will be taking care of ojou-sama and also be your blood bag. Lute, greet ojou-sama.”

“Good morning, Chrisse ojou-sama. I am ojou-sama’s blood bag and caretaker, apprentice butler Lute, of the human race. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

I gave her the greeting I learned from Merry last night.

I put my right hand, fingers outstretched, to my left shoulder, put my left hand in a fist behind me, and lightly bow my head.

This is how a formal greeting is done around this world.

For women, they grip the edge of their skirt with their left hand and raise it slightly, otherwise it's the same as men.

Ojou-sama used her magic device—the mini blackboard she used yesterday.

"Boys are scary so I'd rather not have a boy take care of me."

Then ojou-sama hid herself just like she did yesterday.

After that, she won't come out no matter how much we called.

1st day, morning… I failed at communication from the very beginning.

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While I was in the room, Chrisse ojou-sama was afraid and didn't come out.

There was nothing I could do, so I brought her breakfast to just outside her room, and left Mercè-san to take it inside.

Mercè-san and I then tidied up ojou-sama's breakfast and had a late breakfast at the servants' messroom.

"So long as you don't fix ojou-sama's wariness first, it's impossible for Lute to stay in the Vlad house."

Mercè declared while eating her bean soup, bean salad, and thick-sliced bacon.

Since I came to the Demon Continent there's strangely been a lot of bean-based cooking.

“I’ve been thinking about it too, but really, what can I do to fix ojou-sama’s wariness?”

“That’s certainly true….”

Mercè-san stopped her hands from scooping up the bean soup and pondered.

“……Lute, it’s only been a short while, but it was nice to be working with you.”

“It’s still too early to give up!”

“It was a joke.”

Mercè-san delivered her joke in such a deadpan way, it didn’t sound like one.

While reaching her spoon out towards the bean salad, she proposed.

“What do you think of making her some snacks?”

“Snacks?”

According to Mercè-san—Demon races like sweet snacks very much.

Ojou-sama was no exception, she was very fond of sweet snacks.

During tea parties held at her room in the afternoons, she ate all kinds of cakes that doesn’t seem to fit her small body.

So I should have Mercè-san teach me and make some snacks with my own hands for ojou-sama to eat.

If I start now it wouldn’t be in time for her afternoon tea party, so I was recommended to make some jelly or cookies for the tea party that is to be held after dinner (this is also held at ojou-sama’s room).

In other words, the plan is to fix ojou-sama's wariness and get closer to her through food.

"I see, it's a good idea. By the way….. there's jelly?"

"Don't they have those at the Fairy Human Continent? It's a snack made of slime powder. It's transparent like water and soft, you put fruits and other things inside."

It's made of slime…..?!

"If there's jelly, is there any pudding?"

"Pudding? No, I've never heard of anything with that name. What kind of thing is it?"

Mercè-san cutely tilted her head slightly.

Humm, it seems like this world still doesn't know of pudding.

"It's a soft solid food like jelly."

"It's a good snack for the evening party. Can you make that pudding, Lute?"

"No problem. I've made it before."

"Then after breakfast is done tell me what ingredients you need. I'll prepare them so it'll be done just in time for the evening party."

"Thank you very much!"

Thus the "Grand Snack Operation" to get Chrisse ojou-sama to relax her wariness, begins.

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I was left in charge of the evening tea party by Mercè-san, to make the food I intruded on the food preparation area.

I entrusted Mercè-san to tell ojou-sama that I'll be making pudding for tonight's evening party.

Next is whether or not the taste of pudding is to ojou-sama's liking.

The ingredients for pudding are eggs, milk, and sugar.

During the time I lived alone in my previous life.

Every now and again, there were many times I got engrossed in food and made it.

For the eggs, peacock eggs like the ones I'd taken care of in the orphanage.

Milk from hairy-headed cows.

Imported sugar from the Fairy Human Continent.

This world unexpectedly had similar spices and seasonings.

Thanks to that it took almost no time at all to put the ingredients in order.

I uttered my gratitude as soon as I started making the food.

I began making pudding immediately.

Firstly, I put sugar and water in a small saucepan, then cooked them in a medium fire.

There was nothing convenient like gas stoves so I had to regulate the fire by taking burning firewood in and out.

Once it had become thick and turned the color of brown sugar, I took it off from the fire and transferred it to a ceramic container.

I made pudding batter by mixing eggs, milk, and sugar.

I poured the pudding batter into a bowl using a tea strainer. I filled the saucepan with water, and put it on a fire until it boiled.

The caramel sauce had already settled in the bottom of the cup, so I carefully poured the pudding batter in.

After that, I added hot water, put a lid on it and left it for 10 minutes.

I took it off the fire, and waited another 10 minutes.

I finished by taking the cup and putting it inside a refrigerator.

The refrigerators of this world were the old types that were cooled down by putting ice on top.

I made some space in the fridge and cooled it carefully so that the smells of other foodstuffs didn't get on it.

Preparation complete.

All I have to do now was wait for the evening party.

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The custom of having tea before going to sleep at night was called "evening party" in the Demon Continent.

Though it's called a party, because it happens at night it was not something grand, but was a private affair instead, sometimes master and the others came along, but usually it was just ojou-sama and her retainers.

I brought my handmade pudding for today's evening party.

It's the third time I went to ojou-sama's room.

As soon as ojou-sama caught sight of me, she once again covered her head with her quilt and hid behind her bed.

I expected as much.

At first I wanted to leave it to Mercè-san, and just receive her report on whether or not ojou-sama likes it. But Mercè-san rejected my proposal.

She insisted that it would be better in order to shorten the distance between us if I went into the room and made a direct appeal of making the pudding.

“Besides, ojou-sama is sure to like such a tasty treat as this. So have some confidence in yourself.”

To make sure it would suit ojou-sama, I had Mercè-san taste it.

Mercè-san who did not have much in the way of facial expressions blushed in surprise at the taste when she ate a mouthful of the pudding.

Having gained a boost of confidence from Mercè-san’s reaction, I visited ojou-sama’s room; third time’s the charm.

“Ojou-sama, this is the snack I made myself, it’s called a [Pudding]”

“……”

Ojou-sama reacted to the snack she’d never heard of before, the so-called [Pudding], and peeped from behind the feather quilt, showing only her eyes.

I turned the cup upside down on the plate with slow movements so I didn’t frighten her.

When I moved my hands two, three times, the pudding wobbled left and right on the plate.

“!?”

Ojou-sama became fixated on the wobbling.

I got a response.

For me who knew what the real thing looked like, it appeared rather bad because the caramel sauce became somewhat mixed with the pudding batter, but it shouldn't be a problem since it's the first time ojou-sama saw it.

"This is a snack made from eggs, milk, and sugar. It's soft like jelly, so please scoop it up with a spoon and eat it."

I put a wooden spoon on the plate and handed it over to Mercè-san.

Mercè-san took it with care, and presented it to ojou-sama who was cowering behind the bed.

"……"

But ojou-sama made no signs of taking the plate.

She was curious, but it seems her fear of the opposite sex won out.

(Dammit! Does this mean the "Grand Snack Operation" failed!?)

The moment I thought that, Mercè-san scooped up the pudding with the spoon and brought it towards ojou-sama's mouth.

"Ojou-sama, say "ah~n"."

"……"

At first she hesitated at the spoon she was presented with, but ojou-sama ate the pudding with a *glomp* sound effect.

"……!!!?"

Ojou-sama's white skin became red like a flower in bloom.

Her eyes sparkled like twinkling stars and her lips broke into a smile, looking happy.

Without a moment's delay, Mercè-san presented a second scoop.

"Ojou-sama, "ah~n"."

She ate the next spoonful without hesitation.

Just like that, she ate all the pudding on the plate clean up.

Holding on to the scented tea Mercè-san had heated up in her small hands, ojou-sama washed down the sweet aftertaste in her mouth and took a long breath.

I talked to ojou-sama in a gentle tone in order to not frighten her.

"Was the pudding I made to ojou-sama's liking?"

It was obvious from looking at the plate that was eaten clean and the expression on her face.

Ojou-sama, as expected, took her hand off the scented tea and wrote on her mini blackboard.

"It's the first time I eat that snack, it was very delicious."

"If it's alright with ojou-sama, will you be fine with having me make more snacks for tomorrow's tea party and evening party?"

Ojou-sama hesitated a bit, but she showed her face from behind the mini blackboard and nodded.

"I want to have pudding tomorrow too, so please take care of me."

"Certainly!"

I made a triumphant pose in my mind, and bowed politely.

The first round of the "snacks operation" was a success!

Let's make snacks and open up ojou-sama's heart like this. Then whatever happens, I'll be ojou-sama's blood bag and caretaker and stay at the blood house!

Also, for the sake of my chastity!

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The rest was a digression.

As I left ojou-sama's room behind, I was called to stop by the head butler Merry.

It looks like the master and madam called for me.

With questions in my head, I went to the room where they were and—

""Hahahahaha! This so-called [Pudding] is really delicious! It was worth buying Lute even just for this!"

"Ah, darling, Lute still hasn't been formally accepted into the house yet."

"Hahahahahaha! That's right, that's right!"

"Darling is always so careless."

The reason I was called by master and madam was because they wanted to have the pudding ojou-sama ate—so I was ordered to bring them some.

The two were having a friendly chat while scrumptiously eating the two puddings I had set aside.

The muscular, black-skinned Count with over 2 meters in height was eating the pudding in small bites, it was a rather surreal scene.

Madam was eating gracefully like a picture, but….

Those puddings were the ones I had set aside so I can enjoy eating them tonight after so long.

I certainly can't refuse saying "these are for me", so I tearfully handed them over.

Uuuuu…… and I thought I would be having pudding after so long, too.

Thus I shortened the distance between me and ojou-sama, and the first day passed.

Chapter 025 – Day 2: Mille Crêpe

The second day, morning.

I went together with the head maid Mercè-san to wake ojou-sama up.

Mercè-san knocked like yesterday, then opened the door without waiting for a reply.

“Ojou-sama, excuse us.”

“Excuse us.”

This morning ojou-sama seems to be awake, sitting blankly on the king-size bed.

Wearing pajamas made of something like silk, she had her slightly wavy blond hair spread out on the white sheets.

Because she was still sleepy, she had a vacant look on her face, yet her lovely cuteness was almost like a princess out of a fairy tale.

“Good morning ojou-sama.”

“Good morning.”

As Mercè-san and I greeted her, ojou-sama quickly bowed her head.

She didn’t run and hide anymore even when there’s me, a boy, here.

Instead, she ran her fingers on her mini blackboard.

“I’ll be looking forward to today’s tea party and evening party”, was what she conveyed to us.

“I’ll do everything I can and make snacks for ojou-sama.”

She smiled bashfully as I answered.

Crap, she’s cute!

If I had a daughter like ojou-sama in my previous life, I would have spoiled the hell out of her.

With that thought on my mind, I went out the room for a moment to make breakfast.

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I had a late breakfast with Mercè-san again today.

Once breakfast is done, I immediately started making snacks for the afternoon tea party.

The cakes to be presented to ojou-sama was already being handled by an exclusive chef.

I began working on making something else than the pudding I made yesterday.

The cake I decided to make today was a crêpe—a mille crêpe.

It is made by spreading cream and custard in between the crêpe dough and piling it up.

Crêpes were first made in France, but the origin of [Mille Crêpe] is Japanese.

Firstly, I made the crêpe dough, and cooked it in a shallow frying pan while adjusting the fire on the stove.

Once I’ve made crêpes until there was no more dough left, I left them to cool.

While that happens, I made custard cream.

Custard cream is made from egg yolk, sugar, flour, and milk.

I mixed the yolk, sugar, and flour, and evened them out while adding milk. Then I put it on a low fire until it became thick.

Once the custard is finished, I cut up fruits to put in the cake. Today I'll be using a fruit similar to strawberries called a rawberry.

It tasted just like a strawberry when I tried eating it.

I cut the rawberry up into thin slices.

After all the preparation was done, all that's left to do is to coat the crêpes in custard and put the rawberry slices on top.

Repeat that 20 times, and the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe] was finished.

But in the end, I was still an amateur cook, so I had to show it to the Vlad house head chef afterwards.

The head chef, Malcolm of the Demon Race, Lizard Clan, cut off the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe] into rectangular shape.

In the end, he put a little bit of the leftover custard on top, and set an uncut rawberry on it.

Like this, it became presentable, so much that I thought that it could be displayed on a storefront. As expected from the head chef.

Ojou-sama would surely be happy with this.

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"This is the cake I made, a [Rawberry Mille Crêpe]."

It was the afternoon tea party.

I brought the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe] to her room.

Scented tea had already been set on the table with a tablecloth on it.

There are other cakes besides my [Mille Crêpe] put on the table. But ojou-sama's eyes were entirely fixed on the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe].

"It looks so tasty."

Ojou-sama showed her mini blackboard to me, who was standing at the doorway.

I lightly bowed at her words.

While I was standing by the doorway, Mercè-san was helping ojou-sama.

Ojou-sama immediately told Mercè-san she wanted to eat the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe]

The head chef Malcolm-san had already cut the cakes up, so all Mercè-san had to do was put it on a plate.

Ojou-sama stretched a wooden spoon towards the [Rawberry Mille Crêpe] in front of her eyes.

"♪♪♪"

Ojou-sama happily rested her face on one hand as she took a mouthful.

Second mouthful, third—once I noticed, she had already eaten a whole plate of cake.

Then ojou-sama asked for a second helping of [Rawberry Mille Crêpe]

During breakfast and dinner she ate a considerable amount of food, but it seems she had a separate stomach for snacks.

As expected from a Demon Race with a sweet tooth.

She drank some scented tea to wash down the lingering sweetness, and wrote on her mini blackboard.

“Yesterday’s pudding was really tasty, but today’s cake was also really tasty. Can you make me some more?”

“Of course. I’ll do my best and make other snacks I can also make for ojou-sama.”

“I’m really looking forward to it.”

Ojou-sama had taken a very friendly attitude compared to the day before yesterday. However—

“Well then, I shall put the empty plates away.”

“-hi!”

I approached ojou-sama to take the plates.

As I did so, her body stiffened. It seems she was still afraid of the opposite sex. She still hadn’t fully opened up her heart.

I had closed some distance with the “Grand Snack Operation”, but she still hadn’t fully opened up her heart.

(Even if I keep on making snacks like this, I can’t make her open up to me huh……)

I started thinking up other plans to replace the “Grand Snack Operation” while tidying up the dishes.

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“Well, what should I do now?”

“Certainly, that is troubling……”

After the afternoon tea party, Mercè-san and I were sweeping the residence together.

In the corridor there was an empty metal armor holding a battleaxe with a broken blade, and a large vase that can easily fit two children inside.

There are also paintings and stuffed animals decorating the place.

Mercè-san and I had our strategy meeting while cleaning each and every one of them.

Once again I was relying on Mercè-san who had come up with the 'snacks operation'.

"Mercè-san, do you have any other good ideas besides the 'snacks operation'?"

"That's right. What about giving ojou-sama some kind of present after this?"

"I see. You mean getting intimate by giving her a present. I wonder what ojou-sama would like to receive."

"How about things that girls like—bouquets, or jewels?

"……but I don't have any money."

If I had the money to give her jewels, I wouldn't be a slave.

Mercè-san's look became distant when I pointed that out.

"……Lute, it's only been a short while but it was nice working with you."

"That joke again. I'm not going to fall for it again."

"……"

"Why did you become silent!? Were you serious just now?! Don't look away!"

"……If you can't give her jewels or bouquets, I wonder if ojou-sama would be pleased if you show some special skills. Do you have any special skills you can show her?"

"Skills huh….. I can pull off my thumb like this."

"!?"

I put my left thumb and right thumb together and slid it away, it was a practical joke that any Japanese would know.

I've heard that some foreigners get surprised if you show this to them.

But when I lightly showed it to Mercè-san she stepped back and fell down on her butt.

She looks very scared.

"You look surprised Mercè-san! See, I only put my left and right thumbs together and slid them off like this."

"……I knew that from the start, you know. It's just that much. I only got surprised because Lute did something strange all of a shudden."

Ah, she bit her tongue.

Mercè-san stood back up with an unconcerned face and wiped away the dust clinging to her maid clothes.

Crap. She's way more amusing than she looks.

"Oi."

While we were having that conversation, the head of the guards Gigi-san called us out.

"Gigi-san, good work."

"……good work."

Mercè-san and I greeted him one after the other.

Gigi-san greeted us back with a slight bow of his head.

"Do you have any business with us?"

"How are you doing with ojou-sama? Can you stay at the Vlad house?"

Gigi-san answered my question with a question.

Looks like he was worried so he came and looked.

Because Gigi-san was an ally who wanted me to stay, I frankly told him my situation.

This is also because he might come up with a good idea.

"—I see, you got closer to her with some snacks, huh."

"Yes. But it gets hard after that. Gigi-san, do you have any ideas?"

"Use this."

Gigi-san gave me the thing in his hand.

It was a book.

"Can you read Demon Language?"

"Yes, I'll be alright."

I was speaking in the Demon Language even now.

Reading was also not a problem, unless the book was too difficult.

Personally, I'd rather read than talk.

The book looks to be a picture book for reading aloud to children.

The book was about a princess who was kidnapped by the Demon Lord of the Demon Continent, and the Demon Race hero borrowed the other heroes' power and came to her rescue, it was an adventure-action and love story.

It seems like this was one of the books ojou-sama likes.

"Ojou-sama likes books, she used to cage herself inside the school library. Lute can use that to start getting closer to her."

"Thank you very much, Gigi-san!"

Gigi-san finished what he came to do and silently went back to his post.

While looking at his back, I came up with a plan. If I pull it off I might be able to get closer to ojou-sama.

I told the plan I thought up to Mercè-san and,

"It could certainly be a good plan. If you do it well, ojou-sama might come to see Lute's good points."

She agreed.

Because of that I suddenly became fired up.

In preparation for tonight's evening party, I called upon my knowledge of my previous life while sweeping.

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Evening at the 2nd evening party.

Yesterday was pudding.

Since there was some custard cream left from today I applied it to white bread and put fruits in between.

A perfect fruit sandwich.

Of course I made it small for the evening party.

Ojou-sama thought that there were vegetables and meat between the bread slices so she was a little averse towards the fruit sandwich at the beginning.

Do custard cream and bread fit together?

However, she remembers how delicious the pudding and mille crêpes were so she believed in me and tried it.

"♪♪♪"

Ojou-sama immediately smiled broadly.

She happily grasped the fruit sandwich with both hands and ate it like a squirrel.

Her appearance was very lovely.

"……"

(gulp)

I made eye contact with Mercè-san.

I nodded and spoke to ojou-sama.

"Ojou-sama, there is one thing I wanted to ask you, will it be okay?"

"?"

Ojou-sama tilted her head, still holding the fruit sandwich, and nodded.

She gave the OK sign.

I slowly cut in.

“Actually, I met the head of the guards Gigi-san while sweeping today and I heard that ojou-sama likes to read picture books. If it’s alright with you, I’d like to tell you a story that is well known in my country. Would you like to hear?”

Ojou-sama nodded, smiling with her whole face.

In my heart I made a victory pose.

I cleared my throat and immediately told her a story I remembered from my previous life.

It seems like it’s best to tell her stories she’d like, like “Cinderella” “Snow White” or “Romeo and Juliet”.

I slowly started telling the story of “Cinderella” as the young lady sipped on her scented tea.

“Well then…. Once upon a time and place, there was a young girl named Cinderella—”

When I finished telling ojou-sama the story of “Cinderella”, she clapped her hands, her eyes bright.

It seems like she understood it just fine.

It was the fairy tale’s author, not me, that made it enjoyable, but I was still happy that she liked it. It’s like the feeling of reading a picture book aloud to a child.

I continued, and told her the stories of “Snow White” and “Romeo and Juliet”.

When I told her “Romeo and Juliet”, tears welled up in ojou-sama’s eyes that were bathed in the magic lamp’s light.

‘Did I fail!?’, I panicked, but it seems that she was moved by the story and teared up.

She wiped her eyes using a handkerchief Mercè-san handed her.

I looked at them and silently stroked my chest.

“Well then, it’s become late so we should end it here for tonight. If it’s alright with ojou-sama, would you like me to tell you another story at tomorrow’s evening party?”

“Can’t you tell me just one more story?”

Ojou-sama wrote on her mini blackboard, stood up from her seat and pressed it right beside me. Mercè-san and I looked at each other in surprise despite being in front of ojou-sama because of her actions.

“Can’t you?”

Ojou-sama took it as a no and her face became gloomy.

I hastily denied it.

“No, there’s no problem. Well then, I shall tell ojou-sama one last story.”

As I said that ojou-sama’s expression completely changed and became bright.

Then she, without returning to her seat, wrapped herself in her quilt and rolled down on the bed.

Then she urged me to come beside the bed.

I then brought a chair and sat down beside the bed as ordered.

Ojou-sama looked up at me with an expression that would fit the term “excited”.

(A story that ojou-sama would like like “Cinderella” “Snow White” and “Romeo and Juliet” huh……)

Normally I would gradually run out of story material, but in my old life I had not only that but also anime, light novels, and manga.

I still had a lot of story material to use.

I folded my arms and pondered a little.

I thought of a story ojou-sama would like and turned towards her.

“Well then, I will finally tell you the best story I saved for last.”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

Ojou-sama skilfully wrote on the mini blackboard while lying down.

I cleared my throat, and after introducing one of the most famous stories in my country, I said the title.

“Then the last story for tonight will be—‘La○○ta: Castle in the Sky’.”

Chapter 026 : 3rd Day – Last Day : Potato Chips

On the third day, morning.

Slipping out of bed, I changed into my butler clothes.

It is said that human beings could adapt to any kind of environment……I have surely adapted to acting as a butler recently. I'm simply happy that Chrisse ojou-sama is pleased about it.

Of course, it is also due to the good environment.

Both the Master and his wife are as open hearted and kind as masters go.

Head butler Merry still kept his distance from me, although he does not "create trouble to chase me out" like in shoujo manga. He just keeps an eye on me.

Head security Gigi-san and head maid Mercè-san gave their cooperation in helping me get closer to ojou-sama, I was really taken care of in the past 2 days.

If the 2 of them aren't here, ojou-sama would still be afraid of me.

Once things have settled down, I would like to express my gratitude to the both of them.

Etching this thought into my heart, I check for wrinkles after changing into my butler clothes.

Opening my bedroom door, I greeted the waiting Mercè.

"Good Morning."

"Good Morning, Lute. Then, let's wake up ojou-sama."

It is now the promised third day. Need to be fired up.

Thus begins a day in the Vlad house.

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I entered ojou-sama's room.

She's still asleep due to listening to my story until late night, yesterday.

There's still plenty of room even if 3 adults were to sleep on the canopy bed.

Ojou-sama's eyelids are closed, eyelashes quivering.

Cheeks flushed in cinnabar red, lips red as rose and moist.

Blonde hair spread on the pillow creates an illusion of a divine princess from fairy tales.

Even so, her sleeping face is surely on the level where it could be labelled as 'Angel's sleeping face' in art galleries.

Though I intended to observe longer, Mercè-san proceeded to wake her up.

"Good morning ojou-sama, please wake up, it's morning."

Mercè-san called out, pulling off the futon.

Like a cat feeling cold, ojou-sama cutely curled up.

However, Mercè-san gave pursuit without mercy.

"Ojou-sama, please wake up quickly. Today is the day your have acquaintances visiting. Waking up so late will cause them to wait for you, is that alright?"

Ojou-sama reacted to those words and raises her body slowly.

Eyes only half open, still noticeably sleepy.

“Good morning, ojou-sama.”

“Good morning.”

Ojou-sama seems to be sleepy, and the words on her mini blackboard looked strange.

But despite her sleepy state, today she didn’t become afraid when I drew near, unlike yesterday or the day before.

I felt a great sense of achievement and in my heart, I made a pose of pumping my fist into the air.

With sleepy eyes, ojou-sama started writing.

“Today Karen and the others are coming for afternoon tea party, could you make the ‘crepes’ cake that we ate yesterday?”

“I don’t mind, who are these ‘Karen-sama and the others’?”

“They are ojou-sama’s childhood friends. The 3 of them are girls and of the same age as ojou-sama.”

Mercè-san explained.

So they are ojou-sama’s same-aged childhood friends, huh.

Furthermore the words written on ojou-sama’s mini blackboard.

“Lute please do attend the tea party too. The story from last night was the most interesting, I want everyone to hear all of it.”

“Yesterday’s……ah, barusu huh.”

“Yes, barusu♪”

Ojou-sama merrily wrote on the mini blackboard.

I introduced these as stories popular in my home town, preemptively substituting trains, guns, cars, and radar to their equivalents in this world, but they still seem pretty interesting.

This is the first time I see ojou-sama being so happy.

Apparently Studio Ghibli works even in an alternative world.

That's seriously awesome, Ghibli.

Caught in the moment, I attempted to open the thick curtain, which was like a dark screen, to have the sunlight shine onto ojou-sama.

Ojou-sama whilst happily writing characters noticed my intention and covered her eye.

"My eye~, My eye~"

"As expected of ojou-sama."

It has been 11 years since I have been reborn into this alternate world.

I happily enjoyed exchanging otaku communication after such a long time.

Ojou-sama and I laughed at each other while making poses of holding down our eyes.

Looking at our figures, Mercè-san face hardened with surprise.

As I opened the curtain, I caught her expression at the edge of my sight, though I do not understand her surprise, for now I'll just show ojou-sama my smile.

"Thus please allow me to tell my stories during the afternoon tea party."

Ojou-sama smiled happily as she hears my answer.

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After ojou-sama's care is completed with Mercè-san, we had breakfast slowly.

I headed into the kitchen as soon as I finished eating.

Ingredients are lined up in a corner of the kitchen, which is now for my exclusive use.

Ojou-sama wanted to have the [Mille Crêpe] from yesterday, during her afternoon tea party.

Hearing that it is on the childhood friends' request, caused me to feel fired up about making the [Mille Crêpe].

The crêpe from yesterday had rawberries sandwiched between the layers, today I decided to mash and mix them into the batter.

The crêpe layer was dyed pinkish.

I requested the lizardman head chef, sweet-toothed Malcolm-san to light the stove. Even though he is not a magician, he's still able to use simple magic for cooking.

The fire is controlled by adding or removing firewood.

A few maids offered their help as they worried about me being a child but I declined them gently.

Although I am busy with preparation for ojou-sama's friends, it's not like it's so bad that I need their help.

I made the crêpe the same way as I did yesterday.

After I am finished with crêpe batter, I left it to cool for a moment.

While the batter is left to be cooled, I finished making the custard cream quickly.

I had not only taken rawberries out of the refrigerator, but other fruits too.

I finished slicing the fruits thinly as they are to be sandwiched between the layers.

Next I smeared the custard cream on the crêpe, placed the fruit on top, and added another layer of crêpe, a process which I repeated.

When I'm done, I requested head chef Malcolm-san to help me cut the [Mille Crêpe] into a heart shape.

Finally, Malcolm-san decorated the [Mille Crêpe] with the leftover fruit and custard cream.

[Heart-shaped Mille Crêpe with seasonal fruits] completed!

As the batter is pink in color, it would be so wasteful to eat such a cute thing if I do say so myself. To that, I am very grateful to Malcolm-san for the decorations.

As ojou-sama's friends are all girls, I think this will be received pretty well.

I gave my thanks to Malcolm-san, and asked if he could help me create one more snack.

I placed a deep pot on the stove, and poured oil in—

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Ojou-sama's friends have arrived.

They exchanged simple greetings with the master and madam before proceeding towards ojou-sama's room.

Normally when guests are invited to tea parties, it would be held in the garden or at the terrace.

However due to ojou-sama being unable to leave her room due to the trauma of getting bullied, her parties would normally be held in her room.

Her friends knew of the circumstances, and this is not the first time they have done so.

Without even a twitch of eyebrows, they were escorted in.

Ojou-sama received the guests in her room.

As expected of a tea party with guests, she is now in her casual clothes instead of the normal pajamas. The light blue one-piece dress is well matched with her blonde hair and crystal clear skin, making her very lovely.

The dark-screen-like curtain stayed down.

The room is being illuminated through the power of magic.

Mercè-san and I participated in the tea party as stewards.

Their piercing gazes landed on the human child whom they are not familiar with.

“Nice to meet you, I am the butler apprentice, Lute from the human race. Glad to make your acquaintance.”

I placed my right hand on my chest, the left hand behind me, and quickly bowed my head in greeting.

Ojou-sama introduced her 3 childhood friends to me.

Bunny Bloomfield of the 3-eyed race.

At first glance, her physique looked like those of a cute human girl, however there is a visible eye on her forehead. That's why they're named the 3-eyed race.

Her family is running a currency exchange business.

As such she is very proud of her skill in counting money quickly.

"It is so unexpected that Chrisse-chan employed a human as a butler, and a male one too."

The next person belongs to the Lamia race with a lower body of a snake and an upper body of a human, Muir Head.

"Isn't it alright, he seems like a kind and pleasant person. As always, the Earl has a good eye for character."

She gave her opinion leisurely while sticking out her red snake tongue.

Muir's family seems to own a mine.

Her lower body, which was of a snake was not covered while her upper body wore a simple apparel that can be easily slid on, similar to a kimono. Her breasts are so big that one would not think of her to be of the same age as ojou-sama.

The 2 of them seems to be very friendly, but the last girl is showing an unhappy face.

Karen Bishop of the Centaur race.

She has the lower body of a horse and the upper body of a human girl.

Her hairstyle is tied in a long ponytail matching her race.

She did not sit on a chair but instead folded her legs on the floor.

“I don’t want to meddle with other families’ employees, but if you ever lay your hands on Chrisse I’ll never let you off easy.”

Is what she said in a threatening voice.

Her tone is like that of a samurai.

Her family does the manufacturing and sale of large-sized weapons and armor. Her race also deals with mercenary work, resulting in her (Karen) picking up martial arts from a very young age, which is how she ended up having this tone of voice.

Ojou-sama made a follow up after Karen.

“Lute is a nice person. He’s also good at making snacks, I had him make some for today’s tea party on a whim, too..”

In response to ojou-sama’s words, I lined the [Heart-shaped Mille Crêpe with seasonal fruits] and [Potato Chips (lightly salted)] on the table.

“Wow, so cute” Bunny of the 3 eyed race lets out in her girly voice.

“Hm, the looks aren’t too bad. The looks”, says Karen Bishop of the Centaur race.

“Karen is really……. However it is such a cute looking cake. But, this is……. is this potato?” Muir the Lamia tilted her head in wonder.

“That is correct. It is a snack called [Potato Chips]. It is made by slicing potato into thin slices before frying it with oil, then adding salt. Though it is not sweet, it has quite an addictive taste.”

The potatoes here look mostly the same as those in my previous life.

I just wanted to try it out, but the potato chips turned out just fine.

The flavor was given endorsement by Malcolm-san who tasted it.

I was fired up because of the impending arrival of ojou-sama's friends and developed a new menu.

Swiftly, ojou-sama stretched her hand towards the [Potato Chips] from the new menu.

"It's crispy, so delicious."

She wiped her fingertips with a handkerchief and merrily wrote on her mini blackboard.

The other 3 also stretch out their hands, and they unanimously said that it was delicious.

In the mean time, Mercè-san brewed scented tea for everyone.

Next, I cut the heart shaped mille crêpe and distributed all of it to ojou-sama and friends.

It was performed so brilliantly, it is not an exaggeration to say that it's a form of art.

"Although the [Potato Chips] are delicious, the cake is also tasty."

"This repetition of sweetness and saltiness is so irresistable."

The 3 eyed Bunny exclaimed in delight while eating the cake and potato chips alternatingly.

"It is just as Bunny-chan said." ojou-sama said as she followed suit.

"……Kuh"

Karen showed an expression of "This is so frustrating, but I'll eat it anyway", as she ate the desserts.

(Even though it would have been alright to eat it normally…..)

Muir the Lamia kept sending me amorous glances as she sipped the scented tea.

“Were you called Lute-san? I’m so envious of Chrisse-san. To be able to eat such delicious food. If possible I would scout Lute-san to our house.”

“Even if Muir-chan asks, it is still impossible. As Lute-san is already the butler of our house.”

“Fufufu, that is so regrettable.”

Ojou-sama once again moved her fingers over the mini blackboard.

“Lute-san is not only excellent in cooking, he’s also apt in storytelling. Yesterday I listened to many interesting stories that I have never heard before. It is especially recommended to Bunny-chan.”

“It won’t be wrong if it is by Chrisse-chan’s recommendation. The book that I was lent previously was very interesting.”

Bunny of the three-eyed race seems to be ojou-sama’s fellow book lover.

However, someone poured cold water on the 2 of them.

“What Chrisse recommended to Bunny is a story where the hero saves the princess, isn’t it? If it is me, I will prefer one where the blood gushes and the flesh was rent.”

“Karen shouldn’t be one to talk. You only read books that are about heroic tales.”

Muir rebuked her slightly.

Ojou-sama wrote on the mini blackboard.

“Then, does Lute know of any heroic tales that Karen would enjoy?”

I was lost in thought at ojou-sama’s question.

A story that a martial artist type girl like Karen would enjoy…….

Then this should be perfect.

I cleared my throat to gain the attention of ojou-sama and friends.

Then I introduced it as a well-known story that is often told in my country and continued.

It might be presumptuous of me, but allow me to tell you of a story.The title of the story is [Chūshingura].

There was a movie that starred Keanu Reeves about it too, labelled as “47 Ronin”. – Sarah

The weapons and tools are substituted to their equivalents in this alternate world, so that it will be easier for them to imagine.

“Wonderful! The 47 ronin are the very example of loyal retainers!”

The martial girl Karen was by the time I finished telling the story worn out from crying.

Especially the last part where Ōishi Kuranosuke’s group ended their own lives caused an outburst of tears.

Her tears flowed continuously without care of being seen by the others.

As expected, ojou-sama and the two other girls were creeped out because of Karen’s crying.

After Karen wiped her tears with a handkerchief, she lowered her head towards Lute.

“Thank you for telling such an amazing story. I would like to have your forgiveness on the rudeness I showed earlier. I was being too stern because I was worried of a male by Chrisse’s side. Since you can create such delicious cakes and told such a wonderful story, there’s no way you’re a bad person!”

With just cake and a story! She's too easily bought !

Of course, I didn't say that out loud and only replied with a smile.

"I did not take it to heart, so Karen-sama, please don't fret over it."

A bright smile appeared on Karen's face upon hearing my reply.

After that, it was girls talk until the evening.

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We ate dinner after her friends returned home.

After we ate, ojou-sama went straight for the futon without having a late night party.

"I'm sleepy because I was up late yesterday, so I'll go to bed now."

I think the lack of sleep and the noisy conversation with childhood friends made her tired.

But if she sleeps as it is I will be returned to the Rano slave market tomorrow!

"Ojou-sama, to do this before sleep, I'm very sorry. But to be honest I have one wish for ojou-sama…"

"A wish? Please say it if it's something I can do."

With a friendly smile ojou-sama runs her finger on the mini blackboard.

I think the distance to ojou-sama was closed very much in these 3 days.

But if she refused… Simply thinking about it makes my stomach hurt.

I requested to ojou-sama while suppressing the trembling in my voice.

“…It’s already the 3rd day since I became ojou-sama’s aid. Today is the day of the deadline. Therefore I want ojou-sama to treat me as a blood bag and suck blood from me.”

Ojou sama was about to write letters on her mini blackboard but her finger stopped.

“……”

Ojou-sama looked my way. Straight at me.

Her eye’s color made my heart beat faster.

I feel as if I’m drawn in by Chrisse ojou-sama’s moist eyes.

“…Lute, come here.”

Ojou-sama writes letters on the blackboard. And then sits up and beckons me to sit on the bed.

While being beckoned, I move towards her.

When right next to her I feel her breath.

“Its the first time for me as well so I don’t know if I can do it well…”

Ojou-sama’s lips open slightly.

“I may be still inexperienced but take care of me.”

She grasps my finger in her small palm.

Usually blood is sucked from the neck or arm, I guess she plans to suck it from my finger.

Ojou-sama grasps the index finger of my right hand with both her small hands and puts it in her mouth with a *glomp*.

It’s warm inside her mouth.

Her tongue, like a different animal, licks my finger as if caressing it.

It seems she looks for a spot where blood can easily be sucked.

Ojou-sama’s pointed teeth tears my skin open.

Maybe because of the saliva, or some other reason, there is no pain.

Ojou-sama separates my finger from her lips.

A thread of saliva which shines between lips and finger forms and extends.

It’s stretching breaks off midway.

Mysteriously there is no wound on my fingertip.

All that’s there is a red mark like a insect bite.

As if ojou-sama had swallowed alcohol her cheeks are flushed and her eyes appear intoxicated and become blurred.

She writes on her mini blackboard while she is unsteady as if she were drunk.

“Though it was the first time, Lute-san’s blood was delicious.”

“I’m happy you liked it.”

Merce-san handed a handkerchief over to wipe off ojou-sama’s saliva which stuck to my finger.

After bowing, as I was about to leave the room, ojou-sama pulled on my shirttail.

When I turned around, ojou-sama who still was groggy, wrote shyly on the small blackboard.

“Thanks to Lute-kun everyone could spend an enjoyable time today. Thank you for always making delicious sweets and telling enjoyable stories.”

Ojou-sama gives her thanks shyly.

My facial expression turned loose from looking at her cute and enticing figure.

“Since I’m ojou-sama’s butler, although I am still an apprentice, it’s only the natural thing to do.”

As I answered with a smile, ojou-sama also returned a smile.

A warm and happy atmosphere filled the room.

The complete change in ojou-sama’s attitude compared to the first day where I began as butler was impressive.

“Well then, let me once again say: good night ojou-sama.”

“Good night, Lute-san, Merce-san.”

I and Merce-san bow and quietly close the room’s door.

Merry-san waited for me as we exited to the hallway.

“…Ojou-sama seems to have gone to bed baa~.”

He regarded my silence as confirmation.

“Then you were able to achieve the role as a blood bag?”

“Yes, thank you.”

Merry said nothing and nods quietly several times.

Even if I deceive him here, he would still be able to confirm with ojou-sama tomorrow.

Telling a lie would be meaningless.

“Merce, Lute. Master and madam are waiting for you. Please follow me baa~.”

Merce and I are following behind him according to his words.

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We arrived in the room where the master and his wife were waiting.

Upon entering, Head security Gigi-san awaits.

Everyone has gathered, Merry will be moderating while the meeting proceed.

“Master and madam, I would like to apologise for the trouble. The results of the 3 day examination is out and I would like to make a report baa~.”

“3 days examination? Was there such a thing?”

“Wa wa hawwa wa wa, isn’t it that. The results of the new magic lamp that appeared this time? If its performance is better than the previous one, it would be good to purchase the required amount. Haahahahahahahahaa!”

“No, you’re mistaken. It is the matter regarding whether Lute should be allowed to be the blood bag of ojou-sama whilst taking care of her or if he shall be forced to leave the Vlad family baa~.”

Both the master and madam showed faces indicating that they had forgotten about it.

Seriously, this couple…

The two remembered the conditions upon hearing Merry’s input.

Merry continued his speech.

“The conditions that master laid out was, [To act as a blood bag and allow ojou-sama to drink blood within 3 days, otherwise a refund will be requested to the slave house]. Lute has impressively completed this task baa~. Nevertheless…”

Merry cuts off.

Wait a minute! Don’t tell me that you are going to use your authority as the head butler to send me back to the slave house even though the conditions have been fulfilled!?

However, what happened was totally different from what I expected.

“Even if Lute failed to have his blood sucked, I had intended to propose for him to stay. According to Mercè’s report: Ojou-sama who has a fear of men is able to openly talk and joke; successfully led ojou-sama, who fears sunlight and venturing out, outside and allowed her to be capable of smiling while being showered by sunlight. To let go of someone capable of such achievements would be a great loss, both for ojou-sama, and the Vlad family baa~.”

Merry, no, Merry-san turned towards me and very deeply lowered his head.

“I am extremely sorry for saying terrible words like ‘requesting a refund from the slave house’ on the first day. I beg for your forgiveness in regards to my diatribe.”

“N, Not at all! Considering the position Merry-san is in, it’d be weird if you do not object! I did not hold a grudge against you!”

“I’m really grateful if you put it that way baa~.”

Master who was watching our exchange, lets out a hearty laugh.

“Hahahahahaha! Is that so! Lute has gone so far to get along with Chrisse! So for meeting the conditions Lute will be received in my Vlad family.”

“Very well Lute. I look forward to the all delicious sweets Lute will make after this.”

“Hahahahahahaaa! Certainly! Even if only considering the confections Lute makes, keeping him makes sense! Ahaahahahahahahaa!”

“Thank you! Master, madam!”

To my expression of gratitude, master and madam are laughing happily.

It seems I can remain in the Vlad house safely.

Merry-san’s gentle expression abruptly changed and became tense.

“”Well then, after this Lute will be ojou-sama’s exclusive butler and blood bag. For you to become a butler suitable to the Vlad family, I will guide you strictly baa~.”

“Yes, Merry-san! I will do my best to become a splendid butler!”

The next day, an official contract marking was stamped above the provisional contract marking, using a little bit of ojou-sama’s blood.

On the next day ojou-sama took a little bit of blood for the official contract marking to overwrite the provisional contract marking.

With this, I became an official member of the Vlad family and ojou-sama’s exclusive apprentice butler and blood bag.

Chapter 027 – New Life

Lute, age 12.

The Demon Continent was in the exact opposite place from the Fairy Human Continent.

There were no four seasons, the weather was always cloudy.

The soil was so barren it was hard to grow crops.

By necessity, legumes that had high nutritional value and can be grown even in barren soil had become the staple crop.

Unlike the Fairy Human Continent, they only have 2 meals here: breakfast and dinner.

The food was simple, consisting of bean soup, salad, simple meat dishes, and sometimes fish.

For seasoning, it's mostly just salt.

Maybe because the Demon Races didn't have any interest in food, even the high nobles had mostly similar menus to the common rabble.

However, they poured their souls into their afternoon tea parties and nightly evening parties.

Demon Race people of all ages just love sweet snacks.

So almost all of the flour, sugar, and fruits they imported were turned into snacks. They also imported scented tea leaves in large quantities.

"Rather than baking flour into bread, make cakes!" was their national motto.

In exchange for importing flour and sugar from the Fairy Human Continent, the Demon Continent exports minerals like iron ore, coal, gold, silver, copper, magic stones, and gems.

Their soil is barren, but to make up for that, numerous resources were buried within.

This was a land not unlike Arabia in my previous world, that was rich in petroleum.

But there were no such things as “countries” in the Demon Continent.

Whenever there was an important matter that needed to be settled, representatives from each family would meet together and decide on a course of action.

Even if they wanted to consolidate into a country, the Demon Races themselves were made up of a wider range of clans compared to other races, so it was difficult.

Mermen and birdmen can’t possibly be expected to adopt the same way of living. It was also impossible to force them into the same way of thinking and doing things.

For those reasons they could not come together as a country.

In the eyes of the other races, they were uncivilized barbarians.

There are even those who look and act similar to monsters.

Then perhaps it was inevitable that discrimination progressed into war.

About 1000 years ago, a war between the union of the Fairy, Human, and Beast races and the Demon Race broke out.

At the start, the Fairy Human Beast alliance dismissed them as disorderly mobs, but when push came to shove, the Demon Race had a higher sense of unity than they imagined.

The war finally ended in a draw, but considering the Demon Race's high individual skill and magic power, it was possible that the Fairy Human Beast alliance could have lost if the war dragged on.

Moreover, the Demon Continent is a country full of resources where minerals like ores, precious metals, magic stones, and gems were buried in great amounts.

They were discriminated against because their appearances were similar to monsters, but the Fairy Human Beast alliance came to know that they were a race that should not be made enemies of.

After the war, it became bad manners to treat the Demon Race with discrimination.

Because there were no countries in the Demon Continent, the title of Count Dan Gate Vlad who bought me—"Count" was given to him by a small Fairy Human Continent country together with a plot of land for his services there.

Right now that land seemed to be under the management of master's acquaintance.

Just what kind of services did he do….

Count Dan Gate Vlad was born as the third son of a vampire family head.

He couldn't hope for an inheritance.

But thanks to the magic talent he was born with, he became an A ranked magician.

Then once he graduated from magic school, master immediately registered with the Adventurers' Guild, brimming with frontier spirit, and rushed out to the Demon Continent.

He went around the world, embarking on all sorts of adventures—like slaying monsters, hunting robbers, getting into fights with dragons, destroying Legions that made an enemy of him all by himself, and exploring dangerous dungeons.

At first people around him took their distance because he was a Demon Race.

But because of his sociableness, strength, and gentlemanly conduct, the animosity that was there at the beginning was quickly blown away, and he made many friends and colleagues.

That master was going hunting for pirates when he met madam.

Mrs. Seras Gate Vlad was well known as the former female captain of a pirate-hunting ship.

She was a competent person with a B+ rank in magic.

Those two met, and immediately fell in love at first sight.

On the same day, master delivered a bracelet to madam and married her.

All their friends at the time could not keep up with their speed, and everyone was surprised.

Then the two returned to the Demon Continent, and set up a trading company.

Thanks to madam's sailing skills forged in her pirate-hunting days and Master's knowledge of language and also connections and intermediaries built with his sociable attitude, the company soon reaped huge profits.

What earned them a particularly large amount of profit was hiring Dwarves to process raw gemstones, gold, and silver in the Demon Continent and exporting them.

The company handled everything from mining the raw materials, processing, and transportation.

To that extent, it was possible for them to establish a system that can achieve high quality, implement designs the customers like, and respond to orders no matter how small.

Thanks to that they had a good reputation with their customers and orders keep coming in.

The other Demon Race people tried to copy master, but they couldn't do what he did, and caused cultural friction with the Dwarves.

They also didn't have connections to the upper crust of the Fairy Human continent like master did.

Thus they could not sell the goods even if they could make them.

If that's the case, then it doesn't matter how much they could produce.

That way, contrary to other people's struggles, master's business kept on growing rapidly.

Right now, the two were all but retired.

The business was mostly left to their subordinates, and they only came in to check every now and again.

What do they do on the days they're not at work—

Madam would throw tea parties, assembling noble wives in similar situations for all kinds of gatherings. She was a person with such tastes.

Master would be busy, earnestly training.

Generally speaking, he seemed to like building his muscles.

When I met master while working in the corridor, he would instantly take of his clothes and pose.

"Lute! What do you think of my muscles! Strapping, aren't they!"

"Y, yes. They are very strapping. I think they are very well trained."

"That so! Hahahahahahaha!"

Satisfied with my reply, he vanished behind a corner.

Then from behind the corner, the sound of Mercè-san saying “they are very strapping, magnificent” was heard, and once again master’s laughter resounded.

He didn’t have to be so loud that everyone can hear…

Also, master and madam would go on trips with just the two of them several times a month.

They looked to be intimate, cuddly trips, not unlike newlyweds.

It was everyone’s ideal slow life.

However, there were those who are jealous of master’s success and graceful days, they were the main family’s eldest and second sons, in other words, master’s older brothers.

The main family was an ancient house, they had land, and generally they were also considered the upper crust of society.

But the sum total of their assets were totally dwarfed by master’s.

It seemed that at any rate, they couldn’t stand it.

Once upon a time, the eldest and second brothers, coming up with a suitable excuse, started a war with master.

The enemy was from the vampire clan’s main house, numbering 1000 people. This includes 50 magicians.

On the other hand, the Vlad house’s fighting force, including master and madam, comes to under 50 people if you take them together.

But it ended in the Vlad house’s complete victory.

The Vlad house's allies were madam's former subordinates and master's adventurer colleagues who were indebted to him. They were heads and shoulders above the main vampire house's subordinates in terms of battle experience and loyalty.

And the most critical thing of all is master himself.

Master's A rank magician title was not just for show.

A rank magician is a title that only a handful of talented magicians can reach after much effort.

During the time of the war, master trampled down the main vampire house's subordinates, bathed in all kinds of magic, without even getting a single injury.

Yet despite this, there was not a single casualty.

It was something he can do precisely because he had overwhelming difference in power.

The eldest and second brothers immediately apologized for causing a war out of their own accord.

Master just laughed and forgave them.

Furthermore master did not demand money or anything besides an apology out of them, for one reason.

That reason is—"It was fun to have something make my muscles shake again after a long time! But I couldn't give my muscles the joy of exercise unless you had a little more spine! Hahahahaha!"

At these remarks of master's, even madam seems to have let out a strange laugh.

Not sure if it's their caliber as people, or if this couple was just a pair of huge idiots….

Master was willing to forgive and forget in good faith, but the eldest and second brothers still held a grudge from this war.

It was rumored that they were restrained from asking for a rematch by the people around them.

It was for master and madam's only child Chrisse Gate Vlad's 10th birthday that I was bought to be a blood bag and steward by mistake.

For vampires, blood was a luxury good, like coffee, tea, or tobacco.

Human blood had an especially good flavor.

The concept of birthdays doesn't exist in the Fairy Human Continent.

At best, there was only a coming of age celebration when one reaches 15 years of age.

But the Demon Continent did have the idea of birthdays.

It ends at the age of 10.

At age 15, they celebrate their joining the world of adults.

After that there were not really any birthday celebrations.

On one occasion, I asked master and madam.

Concerning ojou-sama's being hikikomori.

"Why didn't master and madam do anything to solve ojou-sama's hikikomori problem?"

It's not like they didn't do anything, that much I understood.

They bought and gifted me as a blood bag for her birthday, helping her with a chance to change for the better.

But they built a bath and toilet in her room, as if to say it's fine if she didn't come out of there, nor were they any signs of them giving her treatment to heal her trauma (though I don't know if such a thing exists in this world).

From my point of view, they seemed to have an attitude as if they didn't have an interest in ojou-sama.

That sweet, gallant ojou-sama having parents that don't care about her—I don't think that such a thing was possible, but I won't be satisfied unless I asked them.

Master and madam exchanged glances and sunk into silence.

"…. Lute, do you know of a bird called a Continental Sea Swallow?"

Madam suddenly asked me a question I didn't understand.

I shook my head.

"The Continental Sea Swallow are migratory birds, they go back and forth on the Central Sea between the Fairy Human Continent and the Demon Continent. But the Continental Sea Swallow aren't always in flight. In my pirate-hunting days, I often saw them stop on masts, resting."

Madam took a sip of scented tea.

"I think of Chrisse right now as like one of those swallows that are taking a rest. She'll take a rest for a while, then some day she'll fly again. So in that time, we give her an environment where she can rest to the fullest."

"….. Madam really believes in ojou-sama."

"No, that's not it. It's just that I have confidence in my daughter."

"Hahahahahahaha! She's my and Seras' daughter! Sooner or later, not to mention her room, she'll fly off, away from the Demon Continent!"

"Just like you and me long ago, right. It looks like she's really going to be like that. She can't fight what's in her blood."

Then the two laughed happily.

They had faith in their daughter.

「……」

"……"

I became a hikikomori back in my previous life.

Just like ojou-sama, I stayed inside, afraid of being bullied again by the world outside.

That time, my parents didn't say anything and let me shut myself inside.

Perhaps they believed in me, their son, just like master.

They believed that one day I would summon my courage and come out of the room on my own.

But in the end, I kept on staying home like that, and finally had to be thrown out by my parents.

Either go work at an acquaintance's metalworking factory, or receive 1 million and leave the house.

At the time they said that, I resented them, saying "Some parents they are! Isn't it their job to take care of the son they gave birth to!?"

But I wonder how my parents felt at that time.

I was only thinking of myself, and didn't think of how my parents felt.

At best, I sulked and said—I have a more accomplished younger brother than myself so excuse me if I don't do my job.

If I could go back to my previous life, Japan, I want to face my parents and talk to them.

Telling each other our feelings while drinking sake.

Then I want to know what they were thinking at the time, what they wanted, even if it's too late.

Then before I realized, one year had passed since the time I met with master, madam, Chrisse ojou-sama, Merry-san, Mercè-san, Gigi-san—with everyone.

Recently I've been living as Chrisse ojou-sama's guard, steward, and blood bag.

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Now that I've turned 12, my daily living schedule was like this….

The day starts by me firstly getting out of bed and changing into my butler clothes.

I would open the windows, and let the fresh morning air into my room.

There would sometimes be mice right under the window. They were good guys that would eat bad insects.

They looked totally like hamsters.

They seemed to like sweets just like any other Demon Continent creature, I would sometimes give them leftover cookies and they would happily eat them.

Like I can't help returning the crane's favor, I did it because I wanted to return the mice's favor.

Once I got out of my room, I would meet up with the demon race, hamster clan head maid Mercè-san and head towards ojou-sama's room.

We went to wake up ojou-sama who would still be sleeping.

We would knock and enter the room, but most of the time, ojou-sama would still be sleeping in her large bed even when the sun's already up.

The figure of little ojou-sama sleeping in a canopy bed where three adults could fit with room to spare was very cute.

I wanted to enjoy looking at her sleeping face like this, but I steeled my heart and woke her up.

Even being a hikikomori, it's bad for her health if her circadian rhythm gets disrupted and she became a night owl.

"Ojou-sama, it's morning already, please wake up."

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Chrisse ojou-sama would twist her body like a mayfly, turning her back towards me.

She usually wouldn't wake up even if I called out to her.

So I would open the bulky dark-screen-like curtains covering the windows.

It was cloudy as usual today, but it was bright.

About a year ago, ojou-sama was bullied and became very afraid of the outside world.

Therefore at that time the windows would be kept covered with the bulky dark-screen-like curtains, but it's not the case nowadays.

She was no longer afraid of the light.

But she still couldn't come out of the room.

She would become nauseous if she were forced to come out. At worst, she would turn pale as if she were anemic and faint.

Ojou-sama's heart was wounded with trauma to that extent.

But she managed successfully bask in the light.

We should keep this up and slowly confront and heal her mental trauma.

Luckily the family had money, and a vampire's beauty won't tarnish even if they lived a long time.

As ojou-sama became bathed in sunlight, she seemed to be dazzled by it and rub her eyes awake.

If she still doesn't wake up, Mercè-san would take drastic measures: tear her quilt off and shake her shoulders.

"Ojou-sama, good morning"

"Good morning"

"Good morning. Mercè-san, Lute-san."

It seemed like the sunlight could wake her today.

Sleepy-eyed, she wrote her morning greetings on the mini blackboard.

Once ojou-sama had woken up, Mercè-san would take her along to the bathroom inside her room.

While they get her dressed for the morning, I would go finish preparing breakfast.

On the first floor, Malcolm the chief cook from the demon lizard race has finished preparing the breakfast and is placing it on a push cart.

Good morning Malcolm-san. I have come to get ojou-sama's breakfast.

"……(Gulp)"

Among the employees, Malcolm is the most silent.

His appearance is that of a lizard walking on 2 legs with cooking clothes on and a neatly maintained cooking knife in his hand.

He has the look of a fierce bloodthirsty carnivore, but in reality he eats no meat, he's a vegetarian.

But he has a sweet tooth and it seems he is taking more pride in making sweets than ordinary food.

He came to me and politely bowed his head to learn how to make pudding, custard cream and mille crepe.

Of course I wasn't stingy and taught him all the recipes I knew.

Because of that, occasionally he shares the remaining sweets from the afternoon tea party and evening party preferentially with me.

The cooking is transported by a push cart.

I carry it to the second floor with help of the body strengthening art, moving that is heavy work.

In ojou-sama's room the cooking is lined up on a table and awaits her after finishing dressing.

While ojou-sama is having her meal, I and Mercè-san are serving her as waiters.

After the meal is finished, it's cleaning it up.

I ask other maids to aid ojou-sama while I finish my late breakfast in the employee dining room.

When breakfast is finished Mercè-san returns to ojou-sama.

I go to head butler Merry-san.

In the morning Merry-san holds a study session for demon continent language apart from butler studies.

Reading and holding ordinary conversations in the demon continent language is no problem but I'm not yet used to writing.

Also as a butler I'm still too inexperienced.

Merry-san taught me everything—from how to bow my head, footwork, speech, posture, how to carry tea, how to deliver letters, to common knowledge—so I can become a butler that won't embarrass the Vlad house.

In the afternoon, I prepared the ojou-sama's tea party.

Malcolm-san prepared the [Mille Crepe] that ojou-sama liked in high spirits.

Every once in seven days, ojou-sama's childhood friends—[Three-eyed Barnie Bloomfield] [Lamia Muir Head] and [Centaur Karen Bishop] came over to play.

On those days Malcolm-san became more psyched making the snacks.

The girls seem to often come over to play with ojou-sama who had become a hikikomori for years.

Not only Malcolm-san, but also Mercè-san, Gigi-san, Merry-san, and the other maids, at least as her servants, received them in high spirits as thanks for being ojou-sama's friends.

They seem to genuinely want to come see ojou-sama.

They happily started girls' talk during the tea parties.

The three-eyed race, Barnie Bloomfield, girlishly talked about things that interest ojou-sama, like cute accessories, interesting books, and snacks she bought from all around town.

The Lamia, Muir Head, was so voluptuous and sexy you wouldn't think she was the same age as ojou-sama.

She usually had the role of listener and being the group's mediator with the standpoint of a big sister.

Ojou-sama, too, when she had something to consult, she would stealthily go talk to Muir.

The Centaur, Karen Bishop, was everyone's target of 'affection'. She was hotblooded, a military girl who would rather go with swords than accessories.

She would often get teased by Muir, and ojou-sama and the others would happily laugh at her reaction.

Once the tea party was over, I would have combat training with the head of the guards: Demon Race, Wolf clan, Gigi-san.

He was a former slave, 10 years ago he had saved up and bought himself back from master.

He could do this because he was a strong person, a magician with B+ rank.

Normally, it was all but impossible for slaves to buy themselves back.

After buying himself back from being a slave, he stayed with master and become the head of the guards.

According to himself,

"My family died long ago. I don't have a place to come back to so I stayed here."

Currently he was working here as an employee, getting paid proper wages.

I took off my butler clothes and changed into some rough sportswear.

We went to the backyard for training.

The reason I did combat training was in order to protect ojou-sama when she needed it the most.

The training menu consists of running around the castle walls to build up strength, unarmed combat, and swordsmanship training.

For unarmed combat, I sparred with Gigi-san seriously.

For swordsmanship, I practiced swings on a wooden sword and exchanged blows with Gigi-san.

At night, I carried ojou-sama's dinner to her room.

After I finished cleaning up her dinner, I switched with the other maids and had my own dinner at the employee messroom with Mercè-san.

At the evening party, before she sleeps.

Recently, ojou-sama had taken a liking for pudding in her evening parties.

Malcolm-san put the pudding in the center of the plate, and surrounded it with fruits.

It seems that having cold pudding and warm scented tea had become a habit of hers.

I stood beside ojou-sama as her waiter and told her simple stories.

Ojou-sama delightedly listened to stories I told her from light novels, manga, and anime.

Also, every once in 20~30 days, I did my job as a blood bag.

Just before she went to bed, I would pull up a chair beside ojou-sama, roll up my sleeve and present my arm.

Ojou-sama would bring her rose-red lips to my arm, and lightly nibble my skin with her pearly-white fangs.

I felt her teeth sink into my skin—her white throat moving as ojou-sama savored my blood.

There was no pain, it actually felt ticklish.

Miraculously, when ojou-sama parted her mouth, there was no scar left.

There were various theories, but the most prominent one is [is it not not because the vampire's magic power unconsciously mixes in with their saliva and produces an effect similar to healing light magic?].

Because the scar was small, it didn't seem to be a problem even for ojou-sama who had no talent in magic.

She drank a small amount of blood.

A shot glass' worth, at most.

Once I did my duty as a blood bag, ojou-sama wrapped her small hands around my arm and stroked it to make sure there were no injuries.

Then she smiled with her cheeks red, and wrote her thanks on the mini blackboard.

My heart raced just a little bit.

Then after that, Mercè-san attended to ojou-sama and began preparing for bed.

I was dismissed from service at this point.

"Have a good night."

[Good night]

I gave my greetings to ojou-sama and retired to my room.

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I return to my room in the evening.

When I was bought and taken to the Vlad house I changed into a maid uniform in this room.

Head butler Merry-san.

Chief guard Gigi-san.

Chief cook Malcolm-san.

Head maid Mercè-san.

Normally, servants are not given a room, except those mentioned above.

Normally, you'd stay in a common room, even if you worked many years you'd only get a two-person room at best.

Despite being a newcomer, I, who got my own room, had quite the special treatment.

But the other employees weren't jealous and easily accepted that fact.

That's because I'm a human.

In the past, it came to a dispute by the difference in the races lifestyle, customs etc. there were discrimination and as a backlash to it, it developed into a war.

So for that it is impossible for them to force their lifestyle on me the human newcomer.

Through such pride and various circumstances they fussed about it and gave me a room.

Editor note: yeah whatever… Winter Blues too strong to help out here

In my room I take off my butler clothes so that they get no wrinkles and hang them on a hanger and close the wardrobe.

After I change into casual clothes I will enjoy my little free time.

Eating the snacks from the tea parties and evening parties Malcolm-san left for me, weight training, and doing image training of making the revolver and AK-47 so I don't forget the intuition of making handguns.

I also made notes using the memo, pen, and inkwell I bought with the money I got from teaching Malcolm-san snack recipes and tips I got from taking odd jobs from the other servants.

I saved up money and sent a letter to Elle-sensei to tell her I was alright. However, I asked her to somehow keep this from Snow.

If she knew about me being a butler in the Demon Continent, she'd drop out of magic school and come running.

I don't want her to throw away her talent like that.

So I wrote the letter, asking to somehow deceive her if she ever came and asked because of worry.

"*ya~wn* I should go to sleep. I've worked all day today."

Fatigue caught up to me, so I slipped into bed.

Thus ends one day.

Just like that I fell into a deep sleep.

Chapter 028 - Mock Battle

Lute, age 12.

In the afternoon, after the tea party ended, I changed my butler clothes for something more rough.

Because from the afternoon I would be doing mock battles with Gigi-san.

When I finished changing clothes, I went to the backyard.

Once I was done warming up, I did 5 laps around the estate to build up my physical strength.

After some rest, I went to have a spar with Gigi-san.

There are nearly no schools of fighting in the Demon Continent.

So even though I called it training, it's mainly just sparring, pretending we're in real combat.

At the beginning—

"Lute is too timid to injure the opponent more than necessary. Even if it's training…. no, because it's training, don't lose your way and try to knock your opponent down. Normal injuries can be healed with healing magic anyway."

I received the same warnings each time when I initially started training.

During my previous life in Japan, I lived in a world completely free from violence.

In this parallel world where I was reincarnated, I have killed demons with my revolver and AK47. But, people — those with whom I could communicate with using words, I've neither hit nor shot any.

Even though we called it practice, I still had reservations about fighting without using any safety gears such as gloves or headgear.

However, after practicing martial arts for a bit more than than a year, I grew accustomed to it and stopped hesitating.

Right now, while applying body strengthening on myself, I am repeatedly striking Gigi-san with all my might.

"Deyaa!"

"Your attacks are too crude. Anticipate the development of the battle, and chain your blows accordingly. You know… if it's just hitting each other, then even kids could do it."

For the second time he turns in my straight right and avoided it easily.

His left fist (jab-like punch) drilled into me causing my feet to stop, and break my stance. A side kick with his right was unleashed towards me.

I guard myself with both hands and take some distance.

Gigi-san is the guard chief of the Blood house and a B+ rank magician.

It would be right to say that it is the limit that an ordinary magician could reach.

Of course, there is always someone better. Our lord, the master, is A rank.

But compared to the me with no magic talent, and my magic quantity, it is like heaven and earth.

Having more magic power means there will be an absolute advantage in all the attributes: offensive, defensive, movement speed, reflexes, etc.

That's to be expected because the amount of magic that can be used is different.

If I cover my whole body with magic power it would hit rock bottom immediately.

Furthermore, Gigi-san's basic athletic ability as a person from the beast race is higher than that of a human.

If I lose focus, will be knocked down in 10 seconds.

Hence what I should do first will be…….to focus magic into my eyes, to avoid critical hits.

Reflexes and kinetic vision are simultaneously raised.

Thanks to my enhanced senses, I can avoid Gigi-san's left hook by ducking.

To return the favor, I bent my knees, pushed my body up and retaliated with an uppercut.

Without even trying to dodge, Gigi-san received it with one hand.

We spared like that for hours.

Next we switched to swordsmanship training.

For swordsmanship training I seriously did practice swings and sparred like with unarmed combat.

"When it comes to unarmed combat, there are some parts where Lute shines, but you have no talent in swords. So for now just strengthen your basics and focus on defense. Blades can kill you in one shot, unlike unarmed combat."

Gigi-san says even things that were hard to say straight to the person's face.

Furthermore he does so thoroughly, without leaving room for a follow up.

But this was probably also Gigi-san's kindness.

Rather than awkwardly praising me, it would be better to resolutely identify my weak points and putting more importance on practicing my counters that would be useful in combat.

While sparring with swords Gigi-san also put me on nothing but defense.

I practiced receiving blows from the wooden sword Gigi-san wielded.

He said again and again that in real combat it was more important to not get hit rather than to hit the enemy with a sword.

If it's with a sword, then being showered with blows, even from just one, would dull one's movements.

Even if the wound is shallow, when time passes, the amount of blood loss will increase and performance of the body will drop.

Magicians could treat their wounds with recovery magic, but for normal people it would be the end.

In order to avoid that, I practice swordsmanship with a high emphasis in defensive training.

After our routine practice, we wiped our sweat off with a clean cloth.

During that time, Gigi-san also taught me a way to fight against magicians as opponents.

At the time you fight a magician you must get close and go into close quarters combat. Spells are still a threat, but its more dangerous to be a distance away and be attacked from a long distance. You will be defeated from a distance if your hands and feet can't reach.

But he adds another thing.

In case your opponent is A rank magician and above, you need to flee in any case. Don't think about fighting. Fighting is useless. It's no different from committing suicide.

"Although I have no talent as magician, but isn't Gigi-san of B+ rank. Does that still apply?"

"Yes. A long time ago I fought against one, but I couldn't do anything with my hands and feet. A rank is the domain of a handful of geniuses. There is no chance of victory."

Gigi-san narrows his eyes as he remembers his distant past.

I can feel a hateful light glimmer in his eyes.

I regard that as my imagination and ask a question.

At any rate I can't imagine the power of A rank.

How strong are they, truly? Even if you say that there is no chance of victory, the enemy is also still a living being. Even against A rank, I feel there should be some way to deal with them.

"…It's faster to personally experience it than to receive an explanation in words. Luckily there is a rumour that an A rank magician is in the mansion. That's master."

Gigi-san comes out with Count Dan Gate Blood as a sparring partner and requests a mock battle.

The master accepted cheerfully.

"Wahahahaha! Let's see, I shall ascertain just how strong Lute is, myself!"

"Master please don't forget to go easy on him. Don't let Lute die or else ojou-sama will not speak to you for a month."

"Hahahaha! That would be surely troublesome. One month is too long."

If I die I will be treated like that?

“Lute, get ready. Just in case, if you are alive I can heal you with my recovery magic, but if you die instantly there is nothing I can do.”

“Instant death… please don’t say scary things.”

I responded peevishly to what Gigi-san laid out.

But he’s right. I focus once again.

I encompassed my body with energy

The feeling throughout my body changed.

The master takes off his coat and hands it over to Gigi-san.

As a subordinate he folds master’s clothes carefully and holds them in both hands.

“……”

Again my eyes turn towards masters body.

Not less than 2m big and muscles stuffed into it to the limit.

His dark skin feels completely like metal.

Even without the body strengthening technique he has probably enough strength to easily destroy a wall.

But if its comes to that extent, I’m not so weak as to hesitate at that.

“…since it came to that, is it ok to not hold back even if the opponent is the master?”

At those words Gigi-san looks at like a dragon who looks down on a cocky black and white rabbit before him.

No, it must have been my imagination.

Master smiles in a good mood.

“Wahahahahaha! Sure! Boys are no good if they aren’t energetic like this! Saa, come at me with all you have!”

“Yes! Here I come!”

Victory goes to the one who moves first!

While I keep saving energy in mind, my magic is already near its limit because of today’s training.

I promised to not hold back even if my opponent is my employer.

I put all my power into the first blow.

Eyesight and leg strength are strengthened.

I run like a bullet and strike with my right at a short distance.

The equivalent technique in a japanese martial art would be a direct thrust!

The master didn’t even react and he didn’t put up any resistance.

I gathered momentum in to my fist and unleashed it onto the solar plexus which is difficult to strengthen.

“!?”

My hit surely connected.

But Master didn’t stagger nor take a step back.

His expression didn’t show any pain and his smile didn’t change.

The strike to the master felt as if hitting against a thick iron plate enveloped with layers of solid and flexible rubber tire.

Instead the fist with which I hit was pained and I made an anguished expression.

The master lifts his left arm to the height of his face.

“Fuun!”

“Tsu!?”

He swings his left arm down as if to sweep a fly away.

A single rough blow.

And yet I feel a cold shiver of fear in my back.

I cross my arms right away.

I turned to defense and put all the remaining magic power into a resistance formation.

“!!!!!!???”

When the masters arm hit my guard, my body flew like a rubber ball flipped in a pachinko.

Without rebounding, I crash into the tree about 10m to the back.

The tree breaks with a “merimeri” sound.

To avoid a fatal wound I deploy a magical resistance formation at my back the moment I crash into it

The result was that bones in both of my arms were shattered, while my right shoulder suffered multiple fractures.

“tsu–!!!”

I vomited blood as my internal organs were pierced by broken bones.

I couldn’t muster any strength while intense pain ravaged throughout my body.

I could see Gigi-san rushing towards me with an unusual expression, from the edge of my sight, as my vision fades.

“————! ——!”

Gigi-san’s voice that reached my ears sounds so far away.

My eyelids felt as heavy as lead, and I feel as though I am falling into a bottomless pit.

As I was losing my consciousness, I finally reached an understanding of the meaning behind Gigi-san’s words.

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[I see, that is what has happened.]

The night of the day I had my mock battle with the master.

Head maid Mercè-san and me are serving as stewards at the evening party.

At the evening party, ojou-sama asked to me “Lute, do you have any idea regarding the loud commotion at the backyard?”.

As there is no reason to cover up the mock battle with master, I told her of my defeat in a single strike, with the master not using any skills.

Despite being heavily injured when I crashed into the tree trunk, ojou-sama stroked her chest when I mentioned that I was completely healed by Gigi-san’s magic.

“Even though I had heard that the master is strong, I had not expected it to that extent.”

[But for Lute-san it is incredible to face father, who is an A rank magician, head on.]

“That is because it is just practice.”

Though I do not want to fight the master a second time, not even in practice!

As expected I do not wish for ojou-sama to hear about my uncool account, I could only give an awkward smile.

Mercè-san poured into the empty cup.

The fragrance of scented tea spreads across the room.

Ojou-sama’s smile from a while ago turned into an unhappy expression.

For some unknown reason, she was hesitating and wrote with restraint, on the mini blackboard.

[……Why does Lute-san work so hard to become stronger? You knew about yourself not having the talent to be a magician right?]

She seems to be hesitating about letting another person hear about my potential as a magician.

Ojou-sama was bullied as she was also without talent, resulting in her becoming a hikikomori.

It must have been hard for her to ask about the topic as it resulted in her trauma, and the topic itself is a landmine for her.

As absence of my potential as a magician did not cause any particular frustration which could lead to trauma, I told her my honest opinion without showing an unpleasant face.

Even though I certainly do not have any talent in becoming a magician, within me, I still have the desire to protect those who are important to me. Therefore I'm doing what I could, and that would be conserving my magic power by honing my swordsmanship and unarmed combat techniques.

In the past, there is a river where children played near the village I stayed, and there, a person important to me was about to get hit during a raid by a group of goblins.

Thanks to my training, I was able to save the children and my important person without a single casualty– I omitted mentioning the handgun as it would be troublesome to explain.

Due to that past experience, I continue training even now. I worked hard so that I could protect my loved ones, should a similar situation occur.

[……]

Ojou-sama listened to my story with a serious look.

I couldn't find any negativity from her expression that could be related to 'you are a fool for aiming to be a magician despite having no potential'. Rather, her eyes seem to be shining in admiration and respect.

Ojou-sama wrote on her mini blackboard.

[That is such a splendid way of thinking. Lute is such an amazing person.]

"……That is not it, I only did what I could do."

Ojou-sama started writing again.

"If it is not a bother……Tomorrow, may I observe your training from the window?"

Not only me, Mercè-san was also surprised at her proposal.

Taking my attitude as a denial, ojou-sama's eyebrows drooped, showing a sad expression and wrote on the mini blackboard.

[Am I not allowed?]

“N, No that is absolutely not the case. As such, I will notify Gigi-san that tomorrow’s training will be at the courtyard which could be viewed from this window.”

[If you would, please. I will be looking forward to it very much♪]

Her mood changed for the better as she delightedly placed pudding into her mouth.

Mercè-san quietly wiped her eyes so as not to be noticed by ojou-sama.

For ojou-sama who is afraid to even venture out of the room, to look at the training from the window…… To say that she wants to look outside.

What a great improvement that is.

For Mercè-san, an old-timer who has been by ojou-sama’s side since she was born, she would be very happy at the tiniest improvement.

After the evening party had ended, I implored Gigi-san for the training to absolutely be held at the courtyard. He is also one to adore ojou-sama……the Vlad house.

I think he would gladly raise both hands in agreement.

A smile floated on my face as my mouth loosened from imagining Gigi-san’s happy expression.

Ojou-sama tilted her head when she noticed, but I deceived her appropriately.

Chapter 029 – Onii-chan

"…..How did this happen."

I muttered in a soft voice so that no one could hear.

I placed both hands on my face in denial.

I mustered my courage and removed my hands to face reality….. Master is doing shadow boxing with nimble footwork despite his gigantic figure.

With all clothing removed from his upper body, sunlight could be seen reflected from his muscles, as though they were made of metal.

Between master and me stood Gigi-san who would be acting as referee.

On one end of the courtyard, a white table and 2 chairs were placed under a parasol. The madam sat in one of the chairs, while savoring scented tea that was brewed by Mercè-san.

On the table is a fruit pudding, a masterpiece made by Malcolm-san, to complement the tea.

She's completely in spectator mode.

Furthermore, shifting my gaze upwards, ojou-sama could be seen looking down unto the courtyard from the window.

(Just because of what I said last night……)

I was once again hit with pangs of regret.

Last night, I invited Gigi-san to my room after the evening party had ended.

I wanted to let him know that ojou-sama held interest in observing our training session.

Upon hearing the news, Gigi-san……

“Ojou-sama, observing……~tsu”

He covered his eyes with one hand and turned his back on me.

In the instant he turned his back, was it just my imagination or was there something shining in his eyes.

Gigi-san continued the conversation with his back facing me.

“Alright. In that case, the training tomorrow will be done in the courtyard which is visible from ojou-sama’s room. Be there without fail.”

“Understood.”

“It will be performed in ojou-sama’s presence tomorrow. I intend to carry out training that’s more fired up than it has been until now. Prepare yourself.”

After telling me that, Gigi-san returned to his room.

This is the first time I heard his voice so full of spirit.

To a large extent, he must have been happy that ojou-sama would be looking outside, even if it’s just from her window.

I shall work hard to make myself even a little more useful; I once again strengthened my resolve.

However, Gigi-san……was more fired up than I had imagined.

“Now then, we will now conduct a mock battle between master and Lute.”

As a result of Gigi-san being too fired up, he once again decided to conduct a mock battle against the master as my special training.

With the [Me vs. Master] mock battle as a trigger, ojou-sama started taking an interest in my special training. That's why, in order to secure her interest, Gigi-san arranged this encore revenge match.

Of course, it……was not done out of any consideration to me.

As I remembered the fear from yesterday, my legs trembled like a newborn goat, as if they had been injected with muscle relaxant.

There on one side is the master and company……

"Darling, do your best. Do not forget to go easy though. If darling fights Lute seriously, it would be weird if there are any remains left."

"Hahahahaha! Don't worry, despite how I may seem, I am quite good at controlling my strength. As proof, Lute is still full of energy after yesterday's mock battle!"

"Hmm, that's true. His contained spirit could be seen from his trembling action. What a reliable child he is."

That's not it, madam.

What you see is not a warrior's trembling in excitement, but uncontrollable trembling out of fear.

Should I just hide myself until the evening?

Ever since the master had officially purchased me, the magic prevention choker was removed for the sake of my training.

After the purchase, it is on the owner's discretion whether the choker would be kept on, and so it was removed.

The possibility to escape still exists.

However, there is a magic formation in my arm that is set to allow my owner to pinpoint my location (In my case, that would be Chrisse ojou-sama).

I might get sold to another place from the bad impression, if I were to try to escape.

But, I should be forgiven if I were to hide until the evening, to avoid the mock battle with master……

Turning my gaze to my current owner, ojou-sama……

[Father, Lute-san, both of you please do your best. I shall cheer for you!]

The mini black board sent words of encouragement from the window.

I closed my eyes in embarrassment, while a small hand could be seen waving shyly.

Damn! Such cuteness AaAargghhhh!

I returned her wave with a smile.

As a man, Lute must not run away!
Gigi-san raised his voice when explaining the rules so that ojou-sama could also hear him.

"Then, the mock battle between master and Lute shall begin soon. It will be Lute's victory if he can withstand the master's attack for 10 seconds. Of course, other than evasion, attacks are also allowed. Master wins if Lute is defeated within 10 seconds. Is that alright with both of you?"

"Humu."

"……Yes."

After hearing our reply, Gigi-san headed to the side where the madam was at.

He raised his right hand up high, and glanced back at us again.

“And so, mock battle……Begin!”

With Gigi-san’s signal, I flew backwards.

I used body strengthening magic on my eyes and legs at the same time, this is done to especially put emphasis on evasion.

With this, I should be able to hang on for 10 seconds……however, I was too naive.

“!?”

Before I noticed, master was there right in front of me, his right hand was swinging towards me.

Even though I had strengthened my reflexes, I couldn’t react in time. Like the image of a film being suddenly cut off, he was already in front of me.

“OoooooooO!”

I gave out a war cry that sounds like a scream as I dodged the right straight with a side step!

Master’s side is open after his punch missed. Chance. Should I attack?

Master’s eyes are shut.

Impossible!

If I don’t increase the distance!

Where should I flee? To the back, right, left, or should I add an element of surprise and go upwards?

With the single desire to increase the distance with master, I poured all my magic into my legs and flew backwards.

However, I lost sight of master's figure again.

"!?"

When I noticed, a large shadow was blocking out the sunlight from behind me.

I burst into cold sweat.

My instincts envisioned my death.

That was all I could remember.

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"It's impossible, impossible, impossible. To continue evading for 10 seconds with the master as an opponent. The master's strength is on the level where it could be called a cheat."

That day, I complained incessantly while doing my duty of waiting on ojou-sama with Mercè-san, at the evening party.

In the end, I was knocked out by the master in a single hit from behind.

I was defeated in the span of 3 seconds.

Although I was healed with healing magic, the second half of my training, which was supposed to be in swordsmanship, was cancelled just to be sure.

I was told to rest until evening.

When it is time for the evening party, I went to serve ojou-sama with Mercè-san.

The topic of conversation is of the mock battle this afternoon.

[But to last 3 seconds with father as an opponent is amazing.]

“Thank you very much. However, being barely able to avoid……Honestly, it is so embarrassing. Moreover, to have special training everyday until I can evade for more than 10 seconds. Gigi-san is being too unreasonable.”

Drooping her shoulder, ojou-sama looks flustered.

She looks so cute.

She wrote on the mini blackboard.

[How about closing the distance rather than increasing it next time? If you could deal with father’s feints calmly, I think you would surely be able to persevere for 10 seconds.]

“Was there a feint used?”

[Yes. After the first strike, he used a feint causing Lute-san to escape backwards, so that he could give pursuit.]

In other words, I thought that I was acting on my thoughts, but in reality it was all within master’s grasp.

(That is like herding fish.)

Master seemed to be able to pull off those extreme reactions because he knew of the actions I will take.

“However, ojou-sama has good judgement. Without even using magic,” I blurted out and frantically shut my mouth.

I am not sensitive enough and threaded onto her trauma.

“?”

Ojou-sama tilted her head.

To smooth over the words I blurted out, I hurriedly requested more advice to improve my condition.

“Is, is there any other advice? With ojou-sama’s input, I might be able to break through the 10 second barrier. If there is anything that you noticed, I’d appreciate it if you let me know.”

I do not distrust ojou-sama, I am willing to accept any guidance in order to fix the flaws that are observed in me.

In close range combat that is almost to the point of touching each other – arm’s length – bulging muscles from training will make it hard to throw fast punches.

There is certainly great worth in attempting close range combat.

I was also taught of the master’s minor habits.

Thus, the evening party turned into a location for the strategy meeting for the fight against the count tomorrow.

After that, I invited Gigi-san to my room just like last night, to inform him that ojou-sama will be observing tomorrow’s fight again. Incidentally, I also wanted to try asking a doubt that has been bugging me.

How could ojou-sama, who couldn’t even cast magic to strengthen her body, be able to keep track of the master’s smallest movements which even I couldn’t do.

Gigi-san was amazed as he explained.

“The vampire race not only has night vision, but also good eyesight and kinetic vision. Ojou-sama’s eyes seems to be exceptional even amongst them, the madam did explain that on the first day Lute arrived, didn’t she.”

I had forgotten about it.

But, that should not be a level that could be described just with ‘good eyes’……

To be capable of capturing the master’s every action without the aid of magic, from her bedroom window on the 2nd storey.

“Ojou-sama’s eyes are more outstanding than Lute can ever imagine.”

Gigi-san folded his arms while reminiscing the past.

He recounted……

Before ojou-sama became a hikikomori, she came came across the nest of Giant Bats in the forest behind the castle.

Giant bats are 2 meters large, enormous bats that could suck dry the blood of livestock, children, and adults.

The forest is situated around 1 kilometer away from the castle.

Master decided for their extermination after judging them to be dangerous.

At night, they waited for the giant bats to gather at their nest so that they could be eliminated in one fell swoop.

The master and madam stopped their smiles as they observed their surroundings, and proceeded on to the extermination.

They had taken 2 of their subordinates into the forest.

Head of security, Gigi-san was left at the castle as a precaution.

The giant bats would undoubtedly lose to master and madam, and a deafening roar that would shake anyone to the core resounded.

It was the sound that marks their victory.

But unfortunately, a single giant bat managed to escape.

It flee in the direction of the castle.

Although Gigi-san tried to defeat it with magic……

The giant bat swooped down at the plains between the forest and castle.

The giant bat was blazing towards ojou-sama.

Out of nowhere, she took out bow and arrows, and in that windy night, her single arrow pierced through the giant bat that had blended into the darkness of the night sky.

She even managed to accurately shoot through it's eye socket which was only about 5 cm in size.

The forehead of the giant bat is very tough and arrows were unable to pierce through it.

Therefore, even though it is common sense for bow users to shoot the eyes, for a child to accurately shoot her arrow without mistake, is reason enough to cause anyone to shudder at such an impossible feat.

"As I stood in front of the giant bat's carcass that was shot, I was convinced. If Chrisse ojou-sama had potential as a magician, she would have dwarfed even her parents' already outstanding talent."

Gigi-san hung his head solemnly.

But, he soon raised his head.

"Sorry, please forget that last part…… Anyway, ojou-sama has grown to look forward to observing the training session. This is a once in a lifetime chance. Lute has to break through the 10 second hurdle with ojou-sama's advice during training tomorrow. In that way, we can create an opportunity for ojou-sama to renew her confidence by letting her taste a sense of achievement from completing this pseudo-goal. It is a very heavy responsibility."

"Then please advise the master to go easy on me during the mock battle."

I spoke in such a tone to Gigi-san who had placed additional needless pressure on me.

However, Gigi-san dismissed it with a "In that case, it wouldn't be training anymore."

Whew. Really, that is such an exhausting exchange.

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The next day, afternoon.

Another martial training……The count arrived when it is time for the mock battle.

Just like yesterday, master is half-naked while doing shadow boxing.

Under a parasol, madam is sitting on a chair by a white table, while savoring scented tea brewed by Mercè-san. The desert that came with the tea today is [Seasonal Fruits Filled Mille Crêpe].

Madam is carefreely drinking her tea as her unspirited cheer goes “Darling, Lute, each of you do your best”.

Ojou-sama’s eyes are shining brightly as she looked here from the window of her 2nd storey bedroom.

The cheers for me can be seen, written in large font, on the mini blackboard.

Gigi-san stood between master and me, and confirms the rules.

“The conditions are the same as yesterday. Lute wins if he perseveres from master’s attack for 10 seconds. Master wins if Lute is defeated in 10 seconds. Is that acceptable to the both of you?”

Both of us gave our replies of confirmation.

It is the same as yesterday up to now.

Why did master request a handshake before the mock combat.

“Hahahaha! Entertain me today, too, Lute!”

“L,Like wise please be benevolent to me.”

Master did not release my hands immediately after the handshake, and told me softly with a suppressed tone.

“I have heard from Gigi. The plan to help Chrisse regain self confidence by having her cooperate and have a pseudo feeling of having completed her objective.”

“The plan is strongly pushed by Gigi-san, although it is not known whether ojou-sama will be able to successfully regain her confidence even if we successfully complete it.. Perhaps, would it be possible if I am given a little more breathing room in today’s battle simulation?”

“Fufufu, that is not happening. That is because I enjoy having a battle simulation with Lute. I always take things that are entertaining, seriously.”

Of course. Even though I knew it.

Can’t I hold onto a sliver of hope.

After breaking the handshake with master, I went back to the starting position.

Gigi-san sat beside madam who is drinking tea.

I directed my line of sight to ojou-sama who is watching over here, at me, from the 2nd storey bedroom window.

Her eyes are shut.

She wore a nervous expression with her hand clasped on her chest.

……A cute girl is devising tactics until late night. I need to be resolute here, or else I’m a failure as a man.

Facing towards ojou-sama, I clenched my right hand into a fist and pumped it into the air.

Ojou-sama’s white cheeks blushed red.

We nodded to each other silently.

If all goes according to the plan set by ojou-sama, it will be possible to obtain 10 seconds from master, the A rank magician.

I took a long deep breath to circulate the air in my lungs and glared at the overwhelming wall-of-flesh-like master in front of my eyes.

Gigi-san raised his right hand up high.

“Hence, let the battle simulation……BEGIN!”

“UoOOOOO!!!”

“!?”

In contrast to yesterday, I charged straight up towards master.

Of course magic is injected to strengthen my eyes and legs.

It seemed that master did not anticipate such an action and only managed to dish out a half-baked right straight.

The reaction was captured by my enhanced kinetic vision.

I lowered my stance to evade!

Without stopping I continue to close the distance, then I strengthened my right arm and planted a punch into master’s abdomen.

“Kuh!”

My fist hurts when it hit the abdominal muscles that are as if they were made from a metal plate layered with rubber.

Master wasn’t fazed by an attack of this extent, and raised his left arm to catch the advancing me.

Compared to yesterday, his attacks were much slower.

As ojou-sama had said, his long arms and well developed, bulging muscles are a hindrance in close combat that is on the verge of touching each other, causing his movements to dull.

(If it's like this, I could dodge it completely!)

To hit the persistent me, master swung his left fist down before doing a backhand attack upwards.

I had sidestepped to evade the fist before it had reached.

"Huh!"

I felt a chill on my back.

Master shot me a piercing gaze, my body was filled with pressure. His left hand gave pursuit from above.

Even at this frightening distance, I am able to notice feints of this extent by discerning how much power is exerted into master's attack.

I am impressed with how good the movement of the feint is.

I ignored my body's orders to retreat backwards.

Sound came from my molars as I clench my teeth, I stopped moving as I failed to suppress it.

Master noticed my inability to move and switched onto the attack.

A left hook was swung to me who was circling around by sidestepping.

I bent my spine as the punch passed through in a close shave.

"Whoops!"

It was a hook thrown from an unreasonable stance and master's body staggered.

Chance!

Again concentrate magic power on my right arm!

I gave my all into the right straight and swung it in……but, there in my sight is ojou-sama shaking her head! Why!?

Master gave me the answer to that.

He with nimble movement, he parried my straight punch with his left hand.

It is a technique called "parrying" in boxing.

His body staggering is a trick, and I had totally walked into master's trap! Ojou-sama noticed it early and shook her head.

It is too late to regret now.

After having my punch knocked off, this time it is my body's turn to stagger.

In a flash, master's hard fist assaulted me in the form of a right hook.

The sound of wind being pierced is not entirely different from those of a bullet.

There is no time to cast body strengthening magic to aid my head.

The future scene of my head being cleanly severed from the rest of the body in less than 1 second, floated into my mind.

"Stop right there!"

At the same time as Gigi-san's voice rang out, Master's right hook stopped.

The distance of the punch to my face is not even 10 cm.

“As 10 seconds had transpired, the winner of this simulation battle goes to Lute.”

“……Hu,hurrraaAAaayyyyy!!!”

A very narrow win!

I unintentionally let out a cry of victory.

Master shook his head in disappointment, and I shifted my line of sight onto madam. She was smiling as she looked at the scene.

Then I left them alone and voiced out to ojou-sama who was observing from the 2nd storey window.

I pumped both hands into the air and joyfully sent her words of gratitude.

“Ojou-sama! I did it! I managed to last 10 seconds against master! This is all thanks to ojou-sama!”

Compared to earlier, ojou-sama’s cheek had blushed and her eyes are moist, she clapped her hands vigorously, as if her life depended on it, while her body leaned out from the window so much that it seemed as if she might fall over.

In response to her clapping, I pumped my hands into the air continuously.

Both ojou-sama and me are being bound with a sense of accomplishment.

Just how long did we stare at each other.

It was probably just for a few seconds.

After I recovered my sense of reason, it is extremely rude to openly express my joy so excessively over the defeat of my master.

Moreover, for a servant and the daughter to stare at each other.

I hurriedly apologise after noticing my mistake.

“I, I’m sorry! I apologise for merrymaking!”

“Hahahaha! Never mind! It is the privilege of the victor!”

“Indeed, there is no reason to worry. Actually you should puff your chest out more. You became able to survive 10 seconds in just one day, that’s a significant improvement.”

“No, It’s all because of what ojou-sama pointed out. I did no more than move according to her advice.”

I used this chance to increase the hikikomori ojousama’s share value.

“You don’t need to be so humble. It’s hard even for a B- rank magician to hold out against Master’s attack for 10 seconds. Lute-kun should be more proud like Madam said.”

“Gigi-san……”

Gigi-san, who put me through this ordeal, patted my shoulders and praised me.

Unusually for him, his expression loosened and he made a smile.

Tears spontaneously collected on my eyes……but Gigi-san himself ruined that moving moment.

“Next you will have special training to be able to take 20 seconds of Master’s attacks.”

“Ha, haaaa!? Wha! What do you mean!? O, ouuuuch! Gigi-san’s fingers are digging into me! You’re putting too much power!”

As I raised my head, I saw Gigi-san’s eyes filled with definite bloodthirst.

“Lute…. You should know this already, but in the end you’re just a servant. Keep your attitude in accordance with your position. Understood?”

Even though both parents are okay with it, why is Gigi-san so angry!

Well he *has* been watching over ojou-sama since she was a baby, so he might think of her like his own daughter…. but still, a rematch against master is too much! It’s abuse of authority!
An ogre! A demon! Gigi-san!

I called him all the names I can think of in my heart.

But of course, Gigi-san did not take back his decision.

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The evening party that night.

Mercè-san and I were being waiters, as always.

The teacakes for the evening party was an assorted fruits platter.

The head chef Malcolm-san took an apple-looking fruit and cut it into a rabbit shape like I taught him.

Ojou-sama smiled delightfully at such a cute thing.

The evening party’s topic of talk was of course about the mock battle I cleared with ojou-sama’s help.

“Thanks to ojou-sama’s advice, I could somehow endure Master’s fierce attacks. Please allow me to thank you once again.”

[I didn’t do anything. It’s because Lute-san worked hard. Lute-san looked really cool today.]

Ojou-sama bashfully took her mini blackboard in front of her.

But it was obviously the result of ojou-sama's advice.

If it were just me alone, I would have been crushed again without being able to retaliate against Master today.

In order to boost ojou-sama's self-confidence, I gave her counsel.

"No, It was really thanks to ojou-sama. If it weren't for ojou-sama, I would have been defeated again today. It was all thanks to ojou-sama that I could win today."

[No, it was Lute-san's hard work. Even without me you could settle things on your own.]

"That couldn't be so. It was thanks to ojou-sama."

[It was Lute-san's hard work!]

"It was ojou-sama"

[It was Lute-san's work!]

"It was ojou-sama already!"

Pfft——Both of us broke into laughter.

Ojou-sama shyly laughed while hiding from behind her mini blackboard.

I put on an awkward smile.

Ojou-sama ran her fingers.

[Then, how about calling today both our victory?

"Yes, it was both our victory"

Again we confirmed our compromise and once again smiled at each other.

Ojou-sama seemed to be in a good mood, and started writing with her cheeks dyed red.

[Actually, I always wanted to have an [onii-chan]… if it isn't too much trouble… can I call Lute-san [Onii-chan]?]

As she said that to me, I took a glance at Mercè. …. She didn't seem especially opposed to that. Maybe it was something like "It's okay if it's for healing ojou-sama's hikikomori."

"You are of course welcome to. Nobody would oppose getting such a cute little sister like ojou-sama. But, since we have our statuses to worry about, please try to not do it in front of people if you can."

[Thank you very much! Lute-onii-chan.]

C, cuteeeeeee!

A golden-haired, loli, imouto-character I want to protect!

Truly a girl that triggers my protective instinct!

"Lute-kun!"
Suddenly, Snow's words played back inside my head.

No no no, this is different.

Just a little sister! It's only love for a foster sister's cuteness.

I definitely did not mean *that*.
[Is there anything wrong, Lute-onii-chan?]

"N, not at all. I'm sorry."

I put on a fake smile to sweep away ojou-sama's worry.

It was a little scary how Mercè-san was silently watching us.

Chapter 030 – Birthday Planning

“Well then, Ojou-sama. Shall we go out?”

“…tsu”

I called out to the Ojou-sama clinging onto my left arm.

While trembling like a small animal in her outdoor outfit, she nodded nervously.

Because of bullying, Chrisse-ojou-sama became a hikikomori.

Afraid of the outside, for approximately 2 years, she never left her room.

However today at last, little by little, she’s trying to go outside her room.

[If it is with Lute-oniichan, I think I will be able to get out of my room] is what Ojou-sama had said.

Grasping my hand tightly like Ojou-sama declared, getting out of the room together with me, we walked slowly down the corridor.

Our destination is the courtyard.

The place where I usually train at.

In the courtyard; Master, Madam, Gigi-san, and the maid Mercè-san, were waiting.

Noticing us, Master and Madam nonchalantly called out to us.

“Welcome. Today’s snack is biscuits. We have seconds, so eat to your heart’s content.”

“Hahahahaha! If you don’t exercise after you eat, you’ll become fat!”

“Dear, even if she is your daughter, telling a girl that she’ll grow fat is bad. Besides, Chrisse is too thin, I’d rather she have some meat on her.”

Master had already shed his coat, warming up his body with something like shadow boxing.

Madam is sitting under the parasol while drinking the scented tea that Mercè-san had made.

Today’s teacakes are biscuits

Malcolm-san’s handmade custard cream is put inside a small jar.

It seems like, they like to spread the custard cream on their biscuits before eating it.

The teacakes look like they would give you heartburn.

Gigi-san seized his eyes with a hand, casting his head down.

Even though her parents’ and Mercè-san’s attitudes were no different than usual, the sight of them being moved by their only daughter coming out of her room was a scary one to see.

As I set Ojou-sama down on a separate seat from Madam, she slowly let go of my hand.

“Well then, I’ll be letting you go now Ojou-sama. Everyone who is watching, your cooperation will be much appreciated.”

[I’ll do my best. Please take care of yourself too, Lute-oniichan.]

“Thank you very much.”

While turning my shoulder, I stood before Master.

Like usual (today as well), I have combat training in the afternoon.

I somehow cleared the challenge of lasting 20 seconds against Master in a mock battle.

The next task from Gigi-san is to “even if it’s a little to injure master or to push him back”, it’s something like this…

In short it is from complete defence training to defence including attack training.

However, this is harder than I thought.

First, even if I get a hit on Master it won’t even leave a millimeter sized scratch on his skin, and even if I try to attack him he will just dodge me with his footwork.

and no matter how I attack him, it doesn’t daunt him at all, let alone make him stumble.

Ojou-sama also felt that there was a limit to observing and looking for weaknesses through a window from a distance, so the the reason for her going down to the courtyard was to see the mock battle better.

Gigi-san intended to use the strategy: to recover ojou-sama’s confidence by clearing different objectives for a single purpose.

Till now it had great results, finally, after 2 years, ojou-sama was able to go outside.

However, it’s not over yet.

For the plan to succeed, and for Ojou-sama’s determination, today I will leave a wound or force Master to stumble a step.

“YOSHI!!!!!!”

I slap my cheeks with a yell to bring up my spirit.

“Hahahahahhahahaha! Today’s Lute has more fighting spirits than before!”

“Of course!” Today I will show you that I can follow your footwork!”

“Umu! Try as much as you want! If it’s the truth, I myself must do my best! Hahahahahahaha!”

You won’t be able to take on that composed attitude for much longer.

Together with Ojou-sama, I came up with a secret plan last night.

I turn my gaze towards ojou-sama who was sitting on a chair.

“……”

We nodded to each other in affirmation.

“W, Well then, let’s carry out the mock battle between Master and Lute.”

Gigi-san places his eyes on ojou-sama, then turns back to madam and raises his arm.

…… no more, recover from being deeply moved, already.

“Dear, please don’t be too fired up.”

[Lute-oniichan, give your best!]

There were cheers from the girls’ camp.

While holding his eyes Gigi-san swings down his arm.

That’s why, I wish he would stop crying already. With a scary face isn’t he crying a bit too much.

“Well then, SHAM BATTLE—BEGIN!”

As the signal was raised, I raised the abilities of my eyes and feet with body strengthening arts.

I leap to the left side.

However, Master matched up with me just like a mirror—But this is all going just as planned!

I believed in the fact that Master would definitely adhere to his super reaction-time, as soon as my feet hit the ground — I leapt to the right.

Master's center of gravity fell forward to throw a right-handed strike; but he was one beat too late for me who had immediately moved to dodge.

In that short instant, I went around and cut in from the right side.

"Fuu!"

With his left hand, Master throws a backhand chop.

I crouch to avoid it.

I go lower and lower to the ground in order to go around to his back.

Master couldn't hold it in and turned around without considering his defence.

Like planned—— my opponent has confident in his toughness. So his consideration to defence is low.

I will take that as my advantage!

As discussed in advance concentrate my magic in both legs.

At the same time as master turns around, I jump with my whole body at him with my right fist clenched so hard it hurt.

It's my only chance.

“Deyaaa!”

In ojou-sama’s past meeting I was to grasp master chin with my right fist!

Of course I collected magic in my right hand and a small resistance formation was formed to protect my fist.

Because master is tall he can’t look back to find me who has lowered himself and find me immediately. Furthermore because his wariness was weakened I was able to hit his chin with my fist.

Since master has a head too, if I punch his chin his brain will sway and he will go down.

That is inevitable for living things.

The problem is—— that master may be tougher than imagined.

“Ha?”

My fist struck a blow as clean as could be. In spite of that, there was no effect other than a few blood vessels on Master’s neck tensing. His chin didn’t even budge a millimetre.

“Fun!”

“Guha!?”

Master swings his arm like to dust off a small insect in a flash.

I blew away to the opposite side of where Madam and Ojou-sama sat; crashed into a wall – destroying it, and finally stopped.

Of course, my consciousness left me then.

Today too, I have suffered a crushing defeat by master.

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”Master is too strong, it’s impossible to accomplish this special training? I came to think that recently.”

[I have the same opinion. Though it’s my father it’s far too abnormal.]

The reflection on today is done during the afternoon tea party.

Lately Ojou-sama wishes that I only serve as a waiter.

As one would expect, Merce-san dresses her in the mornings.

“Ojou-sama looked from close up and noticed something?”

[Yes, a little. The first thing I gathered, is that father’s offense is unusually weak.]

“Weak?”

The words on the mini blackboard are erased and written anew.

[Because there is a height difference to Lute-oniichan, he needed to stoop in his attack. At that time you should force yourself as much as possible. His center of gravity slants ahead too much. If you strike at that moment ——]

Indeed, if I were to attack with a shoulder throw at that moment, striking the ground may be able to at least disrupt his breathing.

“”……..””

Ojou-sama and I both fell silent and imagined it.

Dammit. No matter what, I can’t envision a scenario where it happens.

Ojou-sama seems to have the same thought and we give each other a bitter smile.

Our side's attacks have no effect. Yet, the opponent holds enough power that a single strike leaves us helpless. This puzzle is getting tougher by the minute — even a stalemate would be good.

"If I had an AK47 or something of the sort, I think I could put a scratch on him if I shoot all bullets at point blank at him."

[AK47?]

Dammit my thoughts slipt out.

Ojou-sama tilted her head lovely and showed me her mini blackboard.

When I think about it a little, there is no particular problem to speaking about it.

"An AK-47 is a magic tool that shoots little pieces of metal a long distance using explosion magic against opponents to kill and wound them."

[It's the first time I hear of such a magic tool. It's a quite interesting magic tool. I want to see one sometime.]

"Does ojou-sama have an interest in magic tools?"

Ojou-sama looked down uncomfortably.

[Given that I don't have talent as a magician, there was a time when I studied various things in order to get a job that was related to magic, even if just a little bit…]

Therefore her interest surged when she heard about the AK-47 which is a type of magic tool she's never heard of, and she informed me as such with tiny characters at the end.

The atmosphere in the room darkens.

Just then Ojou-sama drank the last of her scented tea.

“…..Barnie-sama and Muir-sama will come tomorrow. This shall be it for this meeting, it would be better to get to sleep already.”

[That’s right. I have important things to tell them tomorrow, so I’ll go to sleep now.]

The atmosphere around Ojou-sama brightens and smile is on her face as she showed her mini-blackboard.

I have to exchange words in a tone as bright as possible with her.

I help prepare Ojou-sama to sleep

She goes into the bed and extinguishes the lamp.

“Then, good night, Ojou-sama.”

The room goes dark and I can’t see the mini-blackboard anymore.

Instead Ojou-sama waves with her small hand.

I bow with a smile on my face and leave her room behind.

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On the next day, a tea party was held in Ojou-sama’s room.

In the room her two childhood friends, Barnie Bloomfield of the three eyed race and Muir Head of the Lamia race, were sitting

Besides me there was also Merce-san, in charge of serving.

On todays meeting the Centaur Karen Bishop wasn’t at the gathering, but that doesn’t particularly mean that the friend was left out.

The Lamia Muir puts her cup of scented tea down and begins talking.

“Well then, we better get started preparing Karen’s birthday party.”

The demon race has the custom to celebrate one's birthday until 15, like in Japan in my previous life

So today's gathering was to arrange for Karen's surprise birthday party.

Hence, except for her those two gathered at ojou-sama's room.

The three-eyed Barnie counts on her fingers.

"So we'll be deciding the birthday presents, the venue for the party, the food, and the decorations, right?"

"Well, I think that's probably it. I wanted to use this room for the venue, is it alright?"

Muir asked that question to Chrisse-ojousama and she shows the mini blackboard powerfully.

[Then let's use our house's banquet hall. My side can do all the preparations for the food and the decorations]

"B, But the banquet hall is…."

Three-eyed Barnie's expression became gloomy.

Ojou-sama had a slight wry smile while apologizing.

[I'm sorry to worry you for so long. I've come to be able to go out of the room so I'll be alright]

"I, Is that so! What a relief! That's great Chrisse-chan!"

Ojou-sama and Bunny, who seem to be on the same wavelength, clasped their hands together in joy

On the other hand, the mature Muir looks at me while flickering her red tongue.

She smiled as if having understood something.

“I see … as I expected there’s only one reason for a girl to change.”

I understand the meaning of those words somehow, but it is entirely wrong.

That’s an extreme misunderstanding.

For Ojou-sama’s honor too I want to clear this misunderstanding, but it’s not the place for a servant to speak out as they please without permission

Muir put on a coy smile as if to say “I can see everything”.

I said it’s a misunderstanding already!

“Well then, I’ll take up Chrisse-san’s offer to use her house’s banquet hall, my side will be preparing the food. I don’t feel it’s right to impose everything on you.”

“Yup yup! If there’s anything the two of us can bring from our homes let’s bring it out quickly!”

[Then let’s bring together stuff from our three houses. That way everything can be finished with only a third of the work]

Ojousama took everyone’s opinion into account and thought up a plan

The other 2 people raised their voice in approval immediately.

“Now then, the presents. Let’s give an outline of what we’ll probably be getting her so we don’t accidentally give her the same thing on the day. Anyway, I’ve prepared some cute clothes that would suit Karen”

“Mou Muir-chan is a meany. Karen-chan’s face will be absolutely flustered. She will say “Such frilly clothes will not look good on me! Are you bullying me!” like that.”

[She’ll definitely say that]

Ojousama wryly smiled at Barnie's imitation of Karen

"I intend to get a saving box. And you Chrisse-chan?"

[I haven't decided yet…]

"Her birthday is next week so there is still time left, so take your time and decide on a good one."

"That's right, you don't need to worry about getting the same present so long as you look for something other than clothes or a money box"

The lamia Muir gives me a fleeting wink.

"If you can go out of your room now, how about going out to the town to search for a birthday present? I think you find something better by going around and see various things than to think alone in a room."

[In town?]

She had only left her room once

I think going to town so soon would be overdoing it

But ojou-sama clenches her fist with a "gyu".

[That's right. For Karen-chan's sake I will try going out to town and look for one]

"Uh-huh, that would be good"

"Hang in there Chrisse-chan"

Encouraged by 2 people, ojou-sama becomes determined.

If Gigi-san gets to know that Ojou-sama is leaving to go shopping in the town, he will at least hold his face for 3 hours.

While I was thinking that, ojousama looks at me with an upward glance.

Nervous and embarrassed, she held out her mini blackboard

[That being the case I want Lute-oniisan to accompany me to town… is that OK?]

“Of course, ojousama. If it’s alright with you please let me carry the packages.”

Seeing our exchange, Barnie was in pure delight seeing her friend’s recovery. Muir, on the other hand, looked at me suggestively

“I said what you’re thinking is not happening already!”, I replied with my gaze

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Chapter 031 – Shopping

The morning three days after the meeting about Karen's surprise birthday, ojou-sama boarded the carriage in outdoor wear.

Her face was obscured by a hat in which her was hair stuffed into and she wears a one piece dress that is made from a silk-like material. The hem of the dress and the sleeves are long in length, to minimize skin exposure to the utmost. It's a low profile disguise style.

I sit next to her in my butler uniform, gently holding her hand.

The carriage was a six-seater

The windows are behind curtains that block the light.

The faint daylight shines through it.

The escort Gigi-san sat down on the coachman's seat, and steered two horned horses.

To choose a birthday present for Karen Bishop of the centaur race today, we went to the town 1 hour away from the castle.

When I told master,

"Hahahahaha! Is that so! Then go and buy something you like! This should be enough, right?"

He handed over a bag with more than 50 gold coins.

I received it with trembling hands

I thought that it was way too much for me but Merry san the head butler did not react when I glanced at him.

It seems he really intended to give me 50 gold pieces

And so we left for the town with Gigi san as a watchman and driver and I to take care of the money and Ojou-sama

Ojou sama has had a forlon expression ever since she boarded the carriage in the morning

Looks like it really is difficult for her to go outside even after nearly two years.

I made conversation in an attempt to improve the mood.

“Which reminds me, this is the first time since I began working in the Vlad household that I’m going into town. What kind of place might it be? I was so excited yesterday that I couldn’t sleep.”

[It has been a long time for me as well, so I am looking forward to it.]

While I wasn’t exactly excited enough to not be able to sleep I suppose this little lie is acceptable to improve the mood.

Ojou-sama joins in the conversation.

It is slightly hard to read from the mini blackboard due to the dimness.

“There was an Adventurer’s Support Union Guild in a city in Fairyland, and the streets were filled with food stalls. The children were adorable as they held their pocket money tightly as they lined up in front of the candy vendors, were they not?”

[Though Onii-chan is only a 12 year old child, if you speak this way, you sound like an Oji-chan.]

Ojou-sama finally smiled after coming out of the estate.

While I currently look 12 years old on the outside, on the inside I am a 40 year old man with my previous life added. The words spoken might have been a little old-man-like.

But that's alright if Ojou-sama laughs.

[If it is regarding stalls selling confectioneries, there's also some at the town that we are heading to. I have previously tried some while shopping with the others on our day off. Speaking of them, Karen-chan had her fried confection stolen by a crested pigeon while she was in the midst of eating it. Though it was unfortunate for Karen-chan, we all laughed about it.]

Karen really has a <abbr title="TLC Note: it's more of saying Karen is constantly at the butt of jokes rather than her actual character">sweet character</abbr>.

I couldn't do something like that even if I tried

With such a feeling I chatted with Ojou-sama until we reached the town.

The tension that made her body shiver seems to be gone, but we continue to hold hands.

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The city is on an open field, and although it wasn't very tall, the city was surrounded by a wall.

After receiving an inspection at the gate, we enter the town.

There are no large buildings; the general populace coming out and gathering gives it the feeling of a merchant city. Due to the large variety of goods and services available, there are many people coming and going.

The carriage is left at the carriage parking lot.

And I paid the parking fees and water fee for the horned horses.

[……Then, shall we go?]

Ojou sama readjusted her hat and gripped my hand tightly.

I return the grip firmly so as to not get separated from Ojou-sama.

The plan is for Ojou-sama and me, the 2 of us, to look around town while shopping.

Ojou-sama is told that Gigi-san will be looking around town separately from us. In reality, he is to keep an arranged distance and make sure that no danger befalls us.

“I understand. Well then Gigi-san, we will come back in the evening.”

“……Understood. But pay attention to one thing.”

Gigi-san takes one step and he draws his mouth close to my ear.

‘No matter what happens, do not let go of Ojou-sama’s hand. And never lose sight of her.’

‘Alright. I will be careful.’

‘And then, if you do more than holding hands with Ojou-sama like I said before……I guess, you understand? I will always have a close eye on you. So when it’s only the two of you, and you have desire for Ojou-sama, I won’t pardon Lute. Consider your Life done. You understand.’

We’re not even alone; you are worrying too much.

From behind, he painfully grasps my shoulder with an almighty grip.

His blood-shot eyes are scary.

‘That’s all. Take care of Ojou-sama properly.’

After having worried like a father leaving his daughter, Gigi-san removes his hand from my shoulder to disappear into the crowd.

Gigi-san’s appearance was not like someone who would overprotect his daughter….

I regain my spirit and escort Ojou-sama for now.

“Then shall we go, too?”

Nodding, Ojou-sama clasps my hand with a smile and we begin to walk.

The place we aim for is aligned at the corner of the shopping district.

The stores line up at both ends almost without a gap and high-spirited calling comes forth from the stores.

It was really lively. Ojou-sama with a short stature seems to have difficulty breathing in the huge crowd of people.

“Are you alright, Ojou-sama? Shall we change locations?”

She shakes her head side-to-side quickly.

I feel from her strong will that for choosing a birthday present for her friend Karen, this much is nothing.

“At which shop should we look first?. If it’s Karen-sama, she would be happy with things like a sword or spear, a shield, or something like an armour, to name some?”

[Mou Lute-onii-chan, there is no girl who would be happy to get something like that.]

Ojou-sama puffs her cheeks with a “pun-pun” and gets angry.

I’m not scared at all.

Rather, it’s too cute.

I spontaneously poke at her puffed cheeks and the air leaves from her mouth.

Though Ojou-sama is getting angry at my tomfoolery, her cheeks puffed out once again.

This is seriously dangerously cute.

I can't I can't. Like this, it will become an infinite loop of poking Ojou-sama's cheeks.

I utter an apology earnestly.

"Sorry. They are surely not presents to give a lady."

But I think Karen who is from a military lineage would be happy.

But that's better left unsaid.

"Has Ojou-sama thought of anything?"

[Yes. I Intend to give Karen-chan an accessory that I think would suit her.]

Ojou-sama writes skillfully on her mini blackboard while linking her arm with mine.

On that occasion, her chest that's still small is pushed against my arm.

It's hard, but still, I can certainly feel her chest.

While Snow's were like, [Funya, Poyon]; these have a certain firmness despite their soft feeling, have completely distinct vectors, and give the feeling of a miracle that defies logic.

The unripe fruit is still green.

Taking a bite off the apple that has yet to ripen, a sourness spread–but there was a certain sweetness within the sourness. Precisely because it is sour, the sweetness remains at the tip of the tongue and leaves a deep impression.

Furthermore the so called 11-y/o boobs.

It's forbidden, a taboo, to step into such a holy place.

But even so, there is an immoral feeling, like being the first to soil the fresh snowfall.

Needless to say that there's such dangerous sweetness in Ojou-sama's boobs.

Snow's boobs are the best, but Ojou-sama's boobs are also good.

Furthermore if I look at Madam, the future will be promising.

[!?]

As such thoughts about boobs are developing, I feel a thick bloodlust on my neck.

As it hit me, I look restlessly around from shop to shop and see Gigi-san peeking from the space between them.

With the look in his eyes and the blood thirst he put into it, he could easily kill a small animal.

…I got a little too excited. Sorry.

[Is something wrong?]

Ojou-sama tilts her head in wonder.

No, it's nothing. Accessory, is it? Then Karen will certainly be happy to get it.

[Tehehehe, I thought hard about it. Let's go this way. There is a merchant with reasonable prices.]

Ojou-sama leads me by the hand through the crowd.

I take one last look at Gigi-san's direction, but his figure can no longer be seen.

Really, if it involves Ojou-sama, Gigi-san easily loses all of his control…

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I leave it to Ojou-sama who is familiar with the area to lead me through the crowd and we advance toward the inside.

As the crowd thins, the number of wealthy-looking people wearing well-tailored clothes increases.

[This is it. It's a store where I used to shop at with everyone in the past.]

This place, huh…

A shop with white walls made of stone.

Even compared to Ginza, Japan from my previous life, the products and atmosphere are good.

Indeed, an atmosphere that seems to only want to deal with wealthy people drifts furiously.

While I was still hesitating, Ojou-sama casually steps over the entrance as if just entering a convenience store.

Just by taking a single step into the store, I feel like I was in a totally different dimension.

First off, the air smells different.

Citrus aroma with a faint sweetness could be smelled drifting and it is so refreshing.

To one side of the floor, where red carpet is laid out, a glass showcase is lined up.

The number of items available seem few, when compared to the spaciousness of the store.

There is a chandelier on the ceiling.

Its light source was probably magic.

Items such as paintings and well-arranged vases of flowers are on display alongside the walls.

Inside the store, apart from ourselves, there is a young married couple walking arm-in-arm as they are looking around the store led by a clerk.

We, who entered the store, were staring at the heartwarming sight of the couple.

From a third-person perspective, we, who were holding hands, definitely look like a young couple.

The young married couple both had blue skin and had horns growing out of their foreheads; they were of the demon race.

An idle clerk notices us and approaches with a smile.

“Welcome… … ! Oh, Vlad-sama, it has been a while.”

[Indeed it has.]

A well-proportioned, tall, elderly, and gentlemanlike clerk.

His height is around 180 cm and wears a butler-like suit as well as white gloves. Though he looks like he is of the human race, a blacktilde-shaped tail extends from his pants.

Without even batting an eye towards Ojou-sama who uses a mini blackboard to talk, he continues conversing and not with a business smile, but with a welcoming smile that came from the heart.

“And so, to what do we owe this pleasure?”

[I am thinking of giving Karen-chan an accessory for her birthday. Do you have something that may suit her?]

“I see, alright. Well then, please wait a moment.”

Said the clerk and he went into the back of the store.

[It seems that just by saying the name “Karen-chan”, he is able to understand who the gift is meant for.]

Even if they are former regulars, to remember their names and faces… a pro truly is different.

“What a cute girlfriend…”

While waiting for the elderly clerk, we happen to start talking with the young couple who have made a purchase and are heading out.

Hearing the words “cute girlfriend”, Ojou-sama’s face becomes 10 times redder than usual.

Add her shyness on top of that and she ends up hiding behind my back.

“Thank you very much for your praise. At any rate, my Mistress has extreme anxiety of strangers. Please forgive us for our discourteous attitude.”

“Eh? A servant? I thought for sure… …”

“Hey! You’re being rude.”

The man scolds the woman.

“Not at all, please pay it no heed. Rather, it is a great honor for me to be mistaken as Ojou-sama’s lover.”

As for Ojou-sama, a related party, she is red up to her ears after hearing my words as she grinds her forehead against me.

Ouch… It's painful, Ojou-sama.

We made conversation like so and before long, several accessories are brought out from inside.

On the glass showcase, 5 accessories are lined up.

From the right, they are earrings, a necklace, a ring, a ring and a bracelet.

Each one implements a piece of large red gem.

Ojou-sama shows herself from my back and picks up each of the 5 accessories one by one to look at.

"For Bishop-sama who is a mix of gallantry and cuteness, I thought that rubies would suit her well and prepared these."

[Now that you mention it, red does suit Karen-chan well, doesn't it?]

"The necklace over here makes use of a large piece of ruby and is a new product from an up-and-coming artisan, a top highlight from next month's releases. It's only for Vlad-sama that I would present it on this day."

What's with this VIP treatment?

[Though it is beautiful, it feels like it would be disproportionate on Karen-chan's neck… … What are Onii-chan's thoughts on it?]

"Ah, err…. Certainly it's a little too showy, I think… "

"Well then, how about these earrings? The gem is small, but that sort of design is the current trend."

[These earrings are so pretty…]

Ojou-sama takes the bait.

Ojou-sama narrows down on giving earrings for the present, and even checked over a dozen different delicate designs.

Among those, she picked ruby earrings with a simple design.

Its price was 1 gold coin.

That would be approximately 100,000 Japanese Yen.

As a present to a friend, it seemed a bit excessive, but Ojou-sama wholly paid it no heed.

Well… even a slave like myself was bought as a gift, so it's probably not a huge amount of money for her family.

Since we wanted the earrings to be nicely wrapped, it would be picked up at a later date.

We then left the shop with the elderly clerk seeing us off.

[Because of Onii-chan, I was able to pick Karen-chan's present with no qualms. Thank you.]

"I am honored to have been of use to Ojou-sama. Well then, what should we do now? We still have some time 'till the evening."

If we're going home, then we should return to the carriage.

Most likely, Gigi-san is still, from somewhere, monitoring us… or not. He's just doing his job as a bodyguard.

If we return to the rendezvous point at this time right now, there should be time left over.

But Ojou-sama showed positiveness unexpected from a former shut-in.

[If it's not too much trouble, I wanted to look around town since it's been a while.]

An outing after a long time.

Coming to the town where she often spent her off days with her friends must've made her recall all the fun times she had in the past.

I suppose the nostalgia made her want to take a walk.

Needless to say, there is no reason to object.

"Then let's go look around various places until dusk. However, please do not push yourself too hard and tell me if you get tired. After all, we could always visit the town again any number of times."

[All right!]

With a smile, Ojou-sama cheerfully writes on her mini blackboard.

Once again, hand in hand, we go back into the crowd.

Chapter 032 – Brothers

Together with Ojousama, we walked around the busy town.

While browsing through some small miscellaneous goods, we also looked at the colorful flowers in the flower shop.

We came to a well reputed clothes shop.

Some female students who remember young lady then came over and some idle chat was exchanged through the mini blackboard.

From my delusions, it seemed as if I was having a date together with her.

Speaking of which, the thing that made Ojousama's eyes sparkle the most today was some fried pastry being sold at a food cart.

It's close to what is known as 'fried bread' in my previous life.

The bread-like food is fried in oil and then smeared with sugar and spices, it seemed to be bad for the health.

It's about the size of a meat bun, with the price of 2 copper, or about 200 yen.

It seems like she used to buy and eat it often when going out to town with Karen and the others.

It's a well known item that, if you're a kid, you should absolutely have had it at least once, or something like that.

Instead of the afternoon tea party, we bought two well-made fried pastries.

They were wrapped in napkins which looked like the oak leavesused in rice cakes, even though it was bad manners, we ate it as we walked.

Ojousama ate it delightedly with gobbling noises, using her small mouth.

I felt happy just by looking at her doing that.

When I realized, Ojousama had already eaten all the pastry.

It seemed like she hadn't had enough and stole glances at my half-eaten one.

"….. Ojousama, if you like, do you want to eat mine?"

[B, but eating Onii-chan's share is just… unforgivable]

"No, don't worry about it. I'm actually full so you can have it if you like."

[Then I won't hold back, thank you very much!]

"But before that, there's sugar on your mouth so let me wipe it first. Ojousama, say [u~n] please."

Ojousama obediently pouted her mouth as if going for a kiss.

Because of her meekness and cuteness, I almost went in for that kiss, but regained my senses and stopped.

If I kissed her here, Gigi-san who's watching from somewhere would tear off my lips.

I took out a handkerchief from my pocket, wiped Ojousama's mouth, and handed her the fried pastry.

Not caring that it was half-eaten by me, Ojousama unhesitatingly put it in her mouth and smiled as if saying it's delicious.

When it seemed like we both got tired from walking at the same time, we took a rest and had tea.

The eatery was so crowded there was no space inside, so we sat on a bench outside.

I bought a couple of wooden cups filled with fruit juice and went back to Ojousama.

Ojousama didn't look tired at all, and happily swung her legs back and forth while watching the people passing by.

That appearance of hers completely didn't seem like that of a girl who had stayed indoors for about two years.

The figure of a cute little girl appropriate for her age that you can find anywhere.

Unintentionally, I kept gazing at the side of Ojousama's face while holding my cup with both hands.

[Is there anything wrong, Lute onii-chan?]

She showed me her mini blackboard and tilted her head.

"Ojousama looked so cute, I unintentionally became fascinated."

As I praised Ojousama, her pure white skin seemed to change colors and became red.

[Geez, Lute onii-chan, please don't tease me]

"I'm sorry, my true opinion seemed to have leaked out by mistake."

[I said stop teasing me already!]

Even though I apologized to Ojousama, for some reason she puffed her cheeks like a hamster.

She's cute even when she's angry.

[…..!?]

"Ojousama?"

However, her face turned completely pale like a ghost.

I turned my head towards where Ojousama was looking—there were two adult men standing there.

One of them was tall and thin like a dried fish.

The other one was short and considerably wide.

An odd pair that seems to appear frequently in games or manga.

They both had a dumb smile pasted on their faces and dark desire gleaming out of their eyes. The quality of the clothes they had on were good but regardless, there's no elegance.

Their fingers, arms, and wrists were heavily decorated with jewels as if showing off, totally advertising their [crooked characters who had become wealthy suddenly].

These are characters that I don't want anything to do with if I had the choice.

I wanted to ignore them, but Ojousama's eyes were fixed on them, and Gigi-san who should be guarding from a distance came running in panic.

Gigi-san stood in front of the men as if to protect us.

"….. do you have some business with us?"

"We were just going out to town and saw a familiar face, so we went to give our greetings. Right, elder brother?"

"That's right. So don't make such a scary face, Gigi."

"……"

Still wearing a scornful grin, the pair answered Gigi-san.

Their manner of speaking is like that of a master to their servant.

(Gigi-san, who are these two?)

(…… Master's siblings—The head of the Vampire Clan Pylkkänen Vlad-sama, and the second son Ravino Vlad-sama.)

Gigi-san indicated with his line of sight that the fat man is Pylkkänen and in turn the thin man is Ravino.

If you say the eldest and second sons of the Vlad house, they were the siblings who held a grudge towards Count Dan Gate Vlad because his assets far outstrip theirs, and once had a fight over it.

I finally see why Ojousama was startled and Gigi-san was wary of them.

There's no way these two would have goodwill towards Ojousama who was the count's daughter.

The fat man—Pylkkänen snorted like a pig and turned his gaze towards me.

"Is that brat the slave Dan bought the other day? Hmph, he looks withered and pale. Evidently, that Dan didn't give him enough food."

That's just because you're too fat!

"It's just like elder brother said, that Dan is such a stingy fellow."

The second son Ravino was sucking up to the eldest brother.

If master is stingy, then most people in this world would be total cheapskates!

I wanted to object, but a mere slave can't possibly raise his voice against his master's siblings.

Perhaps also enduring the insult, Gigi-san rolled his hands painfully into a fist.

The two's gazes turned away from me and towards Ojousama.

"Chrisse, we were worried since we heard you became a hikikomori. But you seem to be okay and can go outside. As your uncles we're happy to the limits. Right, younger brother?"

"Yes, elder brother. It is a most joyous occasion."

"Both of you, Ojousama has only just gone outside. it is probably best if you do not give her too much provocation–"

"Shut up Gigi! It's fine even if you hadn't said that just now!"

Gigi-san's expression turned bad at Pylkkänen's explosive remark.

Ojousama's slender shoulders trembled because of the angry voice.

"…… I beg your pardon."

"Tch, even though you're just a lowly beastman. Ah… right. Chrisse, as your uncles we're greatly moved that you're able to come out of your room just fine."

Pylkkänen continued his talk.

"But you see, it's not like we don't get why you'd want to stay indoors."

Pylkkänen made an ugly expression with his greasy face.

It was the face of a low-life who finds absolute joy in other people's suffering.

"At any rate, despite having our Vlad' house's superior bloodline, you don't have talent as a magician. If it were me I would've killed myself long ago. Right, younger brother?"

"It is really as elder brother said."

“Or maybe it could have been *that*, huh~”
“Hoo, what is that *elder* brother?”
“Younger brother, do you know about a bird called a cuckoo? Cuckoos have a trait called [Brood Parasitism] where it leaves its eggs in another bird’s nest replacing that bird’s own. It might have been possible that… my younger brother Dan could have suffered something like that. That man is stupid, just as he looks. He might not have noticed if his wife slept with another guy.”

“As expected from elder brother, such worldly wisdom.”

A blood vessel in my seemed seemed to have burst.

I don’t care even if it’s Master’s brother, he’s ridiculing Ojousama as a “talentless child born through madam’s extramarital affair”!

I unintentionally rolled my hands tightly into a fist.

“O, Ojousama!”

As I looked back because of Gigi-san’s panicked voice, Ojousama ran away, covering her ears.

She went running in the opposite direction of Pylkkänen and Ravino.

I’m going to lose sight of her like this!

“Lute, leave this to me. You go after Ojousama!”

“A, all right!”

I left the wooden cup in my hand on the bench and ran after Ojousama.

As I went, I let out a fierce glare at Pylkkänen and Ravino.

Because she didn’t have much exercise, Ojousama’s legs soon gave out.

Even so, because a vampire's base ability was higher in comparison to a human, I wasn't able to catch up immediately.

gasp

"Watch where you're going! Pay attention!"

Ojousama bumped into a man carrying a wooden box and fell to the ground.

Unfortunately she fell into a moist patch of mud.

Her freshly washed white clothes, face, body, and hair became dirty with mud.

"Ojousama!"

Because she fell down I could finally catch up to her.

Ojousama made no attempt to get up from her fallen state.

As I rushed over to pick her up, I saw her eyes empty and lacking energy—she was languid.

This girl's face who was smiling brightly just a few minutes ago was now gloomy and devoid of emotion.

Even when I met her for the first time she had a better expression.

"Ojousama, I beg your pardon."

"……"

I excused myself and carried Ojousama in my arms and then ran to the place where we left the coach.

Once we managed to arrive there, I seated her on a bench outside.

I paid for some water and washed her clean of mud, starting with her hands and face, then her hair.

On Ojousama's palms that were red like the leaves of autumn, blood was oozing out from the grazed skin.

It wasn't a big injury.

If it's something like this, it can be healed with Gigi-san's healing magic without leaving a scar.

And yet my heart was furiously struck with sorrow.

I washed away Ojousama's filth, wiped her clean, and placed her on the coach.

Gigi-san turned up 30 minutes afterwards.

He healed Ojousama's wounds with healing magic.

We left town on the coach as if running away.

"……"

"……"

There were just Ojousama and I inside the coach.

Ojousama was hugging her knees, making herself small.

I was also silent and just continued to sit across from her.

—As Ojousama looked up, she wrote on the mini blackboard.

[… my classmates used to tell me the same thing back when I still went to school.]

What the vampire family head and second son had said earlier was [Chrisse's parents are magicians and yet, why is she talentless as a magician?].

[I had also resisted at first. There's a chance that abilities don't get inherited even if both parents are magicians. But every time I said that they just laughed at me without properly listening to me…]

Ojousama wrote with trembling fingertips.

[Lute onii-chan, Am I a despicable existence for not inheriting magical talent? Am I unnecessary?]

I shook my head sideways.

I was also bullied in my previous life, so I knew exactly what Ojousama wanted to hear.

So I looked straight into her eyes and declared.

"I don't know about other people, but master and madam definitely doesn't think that way. Also Gigi-san, Merry-san, Mercè-san, Malcolm-san, and all the other servants, including me of course, none of us care about whether or not Ojousama can do magic! We all love Ojousama! We're happy just from seeing Ojousama smiling!"

"…….!"

It's tough on Ojousama being looked down by others and being the topic of malicious gossip.

But the most frightening thing of all is how her parents think of her.

Maybe, just maybe, they think she's a [good-for-nothing] because their magician's abilities didn't pass on to her.

When I became a hikikomori because I was afraid of being made a target by those delinquents, I was afraid to even find out what my parents think of my miserable self.

So I did all I could to stay inside and reduced contact with family members as much as possible. I came under the impression that they didn't care about me, and finally our relations soured.

That's why I told Ojousama this.

We'll be her allies, even if she can't be a magician, even if the whole world would turn against her.

We will always be by her side.

Those feelings seem to have reached her, and Ojousama once again burst into tears.

She slowly reached her hands out, grabbed my butler suit, and pressed her face down onto it.

sob

Ojousama continued crying while trying to muffle her voice.

As if she was letting out all the sadness that's been filling her chest.

I continued to gently stroke her soft hair the whole time until she stopped crying.

Chapter 033 – Surprise Party

“Lute, where are we going?”

Whenever she was called over for a tea party, the Centaur Karen Bishop would usually head for Ojousama’s room in the second floor.

But this time I was guiding her towards the first floor dining hall.

That’s why she was wondering and asked me about it.

“The great dining hall. Everyone is already waiting there.”

“Everyone?”

She heard my reply and tilted her head.

Before she could ask another question, we reached the doors of the dining hall.

I knocked and called out.

“I’ve brought Karen-sama”

I had Karen stand in front of the door, and it slowly opened—

“”Karen-chan, happy birthday!””

“!?”

With a soft popping sound, Karen’s body was showered with confetti and tape made of cloth.

Karen flinched hearing a sound she had never heard before.

Then there was the sound of an uproarious applause.

In the dining hall there were Chrisse-ojousama, master, madam, and the servants of the Vlad house.

There was also the three-eyed Barnie Bloomfield.

Also the Lamia (half-snake) Muir Head.

Also finally, there were maids that Barnie and Muir brought along to help, they were all giving a grand applause.

The walls of the dining hall were decorated with multicolored string flowers.

Then there was a banner with the words [Happy 11th Birthday, Karen-chan] written on it in Demon Language.

While Karen was still trying to grasp the situation, Ojousama stepped up to her, holding a bouquet.

[Karen-chan, happy birthday]

“C, Chrisse!?”

Karen was once again surprised because Ojou-sama, who supposedly could not go out of her room because of being bullied, was now here in front of her eyes.

As she took the bouquet, she finally realized that this gathering is a surprise birthday party for her.

Karen burst into tears, looking as if a dam just broke.

“C, Chrisse is such a good friend, to go so far as going out of your room just to celebrate my birthday! Everyone, thank you! I have such really good friends!”

[……]

All of Karen's childhood friends in the hall, including Ojousama looked at each other.

Last time, the other two had found out when they met to prepare for the birthday party that Ojousama was able to go out of her room. Of course, they also knew that she didn't go out specifically for Karen.

But no one had the heart to deny.

They only smiled awkwardly, but Karen, who was being moved to tears, took no notice.

As soon as she went inside the hall, she immediately received presents.

"The first one's from me, okay"

The three-eyed Barnie presented her present.

It's about the size of a 5 kg sack of rice.

"It's a magic-imbued piggybank. It's absolutely impossible to open until you reach a set amount of money, so do your best in filling it, okay."

"Thank you, Barnie. I'll use it with great care."

It was quite the appropriate present from a money-changer's daughter.

[Next is me.]

Ojousama handed over a small box tightly wrapped in cloth on the palm of her hands.

[They're just earrings, but I'll be glad if you happily accept them.]

"Thank you Chrisse. I won't be able to wear them everyday, but I'll use them for parties or important days."

“The last one’s from me. I’ll be happy if you could use them together with Chrisse’s present.”

A maid the Lamia Muir brought along had the present.

Hers was the only one that was not wrapped, and was spread out right there for all to see.

The present she prepared was a lavish dress that made you wonder whether they used too much lace.

It was pink in color, with white lace sewed on it like whipped cream.

Rather than a party dress, it would be called in my previous life assweet lolita fashion.

Karen was speechless at Muir’s present at first, then her face turned red.

“M, Muir! What’s with this frilly, fluttery dress! Don’t you think it doesn’t suit this strict warrior me!”

“Not at all. It’ll be fine, it reeeally suits Karen.”

“You’re still teasing me again!”

Karen, with her face red, got angry.

But ojousama and three-eyed Barnie backed Muir.

“That’s not it at all, Karen-chan has a pretty face and a nice figure, so you’ll look good in it”

[The earrings I gave were simple, but I think they strike a good balance with that dress. Please wear them and show us next time.]

“Well, but, um…”

The two seriously insisted that she would look good in it.

Therefore Karen who wanted to deny it found it hard to respond.

Karen threw a clumsy smile at Muir.

“T, thanks Muir. I’ll keep it carefully so it doesn’t get dirty.”

“I’m glad you liked it. Wear it the next time we have a tea party, kay”

“W, well that’s if I feel like it, eh. Ahahahaha.”

“Fufufufufu…..”

The two continued their give and take quietly.

Once they finished fighting, the band that master and the others prepared started playing.

Accompanied by the music, the ojousamas got started on the food.

The food was gathered and prepared by the three families.

Muir’s Lamia family brought a seafood dinner.

Barnie’s three-eyed clan brought meat.

Ojousama’s side were responsible for other dishes that were simple to pick up (in Japan they would be called something like hors d’œuvres).

Also the head chef Malcolm-san went all out and prepared a mountain of desserts that the Demon Race would like.

Cakes and cookies were a matter of course.

The snacks I made—Giant pudding made in the shape of a ball, mille crèpe with the crèpes cut into hearts, potato chips and a lot of other kinds of snacks were also prepared.

The ojousamas, master, madam, and the maids from the Lamia and Three-eyed families happily feasted on them all.

We the servants of the Vlad house hosting the event were working at the kitchen or going around delivering drinks.

It was not much trouble since there were only few participants.

The head butler Merry-san put all his mind into the work.

Karen asked a question while eating the giant pudding that had been cut up.

“But, what exactly is that popping sound and the small pieces of cloth and string at the door?”

[Those were party toys called [Crackers] that Lute-oniichan made]

“Crackers?”

I made them with permission from master for the opening of the party.

The paper in this world were expensive and doesn’t have the stiffness so I substituted them with wood.

I put in leftover cloth, cut into fine pieces, and string into the wooden tubes like a kaleidoscope.

When the string is pulled, the contents would fly out thanks to the powder that was put inside.

I never thought my gun-making skills would be useful to this extent.

When I finished my explanations, Karen became lost in thought.

“What an interesting device…. Couldn’t we use it to make a new kind of weapon?”

“Hey hey, what is the birthday girl pondering about. Your family work can wait until after the party”

“S, sorry.”

[But actually, it seems a magic weapon like that already exists. I think it’s called an AK-47 if I’m not mistaken]

Ojousama replied using the mini blackboard.

Her friends turned their gazes towards me.

……this is not a good time to talk about the AK-47, right?

It’s already too late for any excuses, so I gave a straight answer.

“It’s a magic device that uses explosion magic to propel a small metal slug to kill or wound the enemy.”

“Something like that exists? This is the first time I’ve heard of it. Is it a common weapon in the Fairy Human Continent?”

Belonging to a family whose business is in developing and producing weapons, Karen was interested.

I had no obligation to answer honestly, so I dodged the question.

“Normally people have no knowledge of it. It seems to be an unusual weapon. Even when I was in the Fairy Human Continent I only heard of it in passing.”

“Where in the Fairy Human Continent did you hear of it? Did you hear about anything else?”

“Hey Karen-chan, didn’t Muir-chan just tell you off?”

Barnie held back Karen’s barrage of questions.

“You’re the guest of honor for tonight so eat up, eat up. This cake’s really good you know.”

“S, sorry. It’s surely sweet and tasty.”

Eating the cake Barnie recommended, Karen broke into a smile.

I made my escape after making sure she’s too occupied to start questioning me again.

As I escaped toward the walls, Merry-san ran past me towards master in a state of panic.

Merry-san whispered something to him, who was sitting in a sofa together with madam, eating mille crèpe.

“!?”

I felt an overwhelming pressure, despite being in the opposite wall from him.

Even the musicians became frightened and stopped their hands.

Ojousama’s friends also turned their heads, wondering what happened.

Only one person out of everyone there, madam, was able to reproach master while drinking scented tea.

“Darling, do calm down a little. Magic power is leaking out of your whole body.”

“…… Hahahahaha! Sorry, sorry! I was a little careless there.”

“Good grief, your carelessness is unbecoming of your appearance.”

The two laughed happily with each other, not minding their surroundings.

With the right timing, master cleared his throat.

“Well, I beg your pardon. There’s a bit of an internal matter so I became distracted.”

The feeling of oppression that I felt for the first time.

That is surely the pressure of the A-ranked magician master being seriously angry.

But what [Internal Matter] could make him so seriously angry?

Master spoke carefreely, as if talking about tomorrow’s weather.

“It seems that my brothers are gearing up for another war.”

Master’s brothers!

Immediately the faces of the unbalanced combo of Pylkkänen and Ravio floated into my mind.

Once upon a time, they made up an excuse to go to war against master in order to seize his belongings.

The enemy, the vampire house, numbered 1000 people, 50 among them are magicians.

Opposing them are the Vlad house who can only field 50 people beginning with master and madam. However the result was the Vlads’ complete victory.

That was obvious. Master is an A-rank mage—that is the domain of monsters that only a handful of talented people can reach with great effort.

Once master and his men trampled all their enemies flat and defeated the baka-brothers, the brothers immediately apologized.

Master only smiled and forgave them at their request, without asking for money or any demands other than their apology.

“My brothers did something embarrassing, starting a fight even though it’s my family and my daughters’ friends’ fun time… Even though they’re my brothers, I need to teach them a lesson.”

Though his tone of voice was calm and he was smiling as he said that, I could feel his muscles bulging underneath his fancy clothes.

“That’s right isn’t it. We went too easy on them last time. This time we should be more strict, right, darling?”

Madam was agreeing with what master said.

Madam, too, was firing off a suffocating intent to kill even while dressed in her fine clothes.

“Therefore I must ask for your pardon, Bishop-san, to pour cold water on your long-awaited party. I will make it up to you sometime.”

“I thank you for your concern, Lord Count. But there is no need to worry, it can’t be helped since it’s a family conflict. Honestly, I had fun this time. I will also certainly show you my gratitude in the near future”

Karen politely bowed her head in thanks.

“So, should we disperse now?”

“Right. It can’t be helped since it’s a family affair, we should go back so we don’t hold them back”

The Lamia Muir and 3-eyed Barnie disinterestedly started packing, unsurprised with the attack, not to mention that it was by the main family.

Those two as well knew that the main family once declared war once in the past, so maybe that’s why they’re so indifferent about it.

The head maid Mercè-san whispered to me, who was making an incredulous face.

(Lute is a human, so you may not be familiar with it, but for the Demon Race it's a matter of manners to [not speak out regarding family wars]. The Demon Race has more varied families than the other 4 races, right? Families had their own customs and differences of habit so by tacit understanding it is agreed that others shouldn't interfere with it)

I see.

So that's why no one asked about the circumstances or whether they needed any help.

"Mercè, Lute, you two please see off ojousama's guests. Afterwards, take ojousama to her room baa~"

The head butler Merry-san who suddenly was next to me started laying down the orders.

We responded and started moving.

Merry-san left to convey the orders to the other servants.

In order to prepare for the war with the brothers—

Chapter 034 – War

Acting as chaperone for ojousama, we saw Karen and her other friends off.

Then we accompanied ojousama back to her room.

The head maid Mercè-san brewed some scented tea to calm down ojousama's mood.

Seated beside the bed, ojousama made an anxious face.

[I wonder if father and the others are alright……]

"I'm sure they are fine. No matter who the enemy was, we have master who is an A-ranked mage, right? He won't lose no matter what."

I had Mercè-san, who was returning after she finished brewing the scented tea, replace me in accompanying ojousama.

"I need to leave my post for a while, so please take care of ojousama."

"…… All right. Don't do anything rash."

"?"

Mercè-san guessed my intentions, and immediately gave her approval.

But ojousama made an anxious face again and grasped the hem of my shirt with her small hand.

[Lute-oniichan, where are you going?]

"Don't worry, I forgot something in my room, I'm only going to go back and get it."

[Is…. that so.]

Ojousama also seemed to have guessed and released her tiny fingers, making a gloomy expression.

She bravely put on a bitter smile like she's trying to endure something.

[Be careful, and godspeed.]

"Yes, I'll be off. I'll be back soon."

I left ojousama's room and hurriedly made for the great dining hall.

▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼

"No way. We can't possibly bring Lute along."

Master and the others proceeded with the preparations in the dining hall.

The remaining food were put in ceramic bowls and became instant field rations.

Weapons and armor were taken out of armories and were checked for damage.

Master had already taken off his coat, and was warming up by doing shadowboxing.

Madam was putting on the equipment brought by the maids in a practiced manner.

In all likelihood, these are the weapons and armor she used in her pirate hunting days.

I ran up to Gigi-san who is directing the battle preparations and reported that I wanted to participate in the war this time.

It's because of the matter the other day—when the baka-brothers insulted not only ojousama but master and madam, I won't be satisfied unless I get to hit them at least once.

But Gigi-san refused.

I snapped back at him.

"Why!? I can use magic a little, I can be useful for the war!"

"No. Lute is ojousama's guardian, right? Do you intend to leave your post for the battlefield. You don't have battle experience in the first place, right? Bringing a green soldier along is just going to hold us back."

My arguments were cut off by Gigi-san's valid reasoning.

Master's side has only a few participants.

Probably no more than 50 people.

However, every one of them are people with experience from the previous war or former adventurers he got to know a long time ago.

Therefore they were at the level where they can cooperate without any complaints.

If an inexperienced newcomer were to come in, that could become a source for discord.

Furthermore, even the head butler Merry-san sided with Gigi-san.

"That's right Lute. You're ojousama's guard and blood bag. Just leave this war to us. If it's that kind of rabble we'll finish them off in the blink of an eye baa~"

Certainly, our side has master.

The other servants' morale were high, too

Some of the maids participating in the battle were menacing, wearing armor and shields on top of their maid uniforms and carrying weapons.

Even the head chef Malcolm-san seems to be participating with kitchen knives hanging from all over his body.

He was scary in an absurd way, like something out of a horror flick.

However, I was told off.

“C, certainly I don’t have battle experience, but I’m sure I can be helpful…”

“I told you you can’t, give it up. Rather, you should stay by ojousama. Then… protect ojousama with your life. I beg of you.”

“Gigi-san?”

Strangely, Gigi-san pleaded me with a stern look and tone of voice.

Questions popped up in my mind for an instant, but he started with the preparations once again.

“Gigi, prepare the anti-silver drug for curing silver poison just in case. We still have some in the stores don’t we baa~?”

Like Dracula in my previous life, silver is poison to the vampire race.

This poison can’t be removed with normal antidote, it’s the natural enemy of vampires.

Silver poison cannot be cured other than by using special medication, the anti-silver drug.

Therefore normally, tableware and accessories made of silver are never ever used.

“Of course. It’s the head of the guards’ duty to prepare enough to deal with it once the need arises. I already ordered to stuff it inside the carriages.”

“As expected from Gigi, you’re quick when it comes to your work baa～”

If I’m here any longer, I’ll be a nuisance….

With a bow, I left the great dining hall.

Like a child who left home with harsh words and came back, I returned to ojousama’s room.

I knocked and entered after receiving a response.

“Excuse me. I apologize for leaving my post.”

Seeing my face, ojousama let out a sigh of relief.

[Welcome back, Lute-oniichan. Did you find the thing you’re looking for?]

Perhaps revenge for making her worry, ojousama gave a strangely malicious retaliation.

I made an ironic smile.

“No, I remembered that I forgot the important thing here and came back in a hurry”

Hearing my reply, ojousama’s face turned red and she shyly hid behind her mini blackboard.

Ojousama’s reaction is really cute, huh.

cough

With Merce-san’s cough, the pink atmosphere went back to normal.

She relaxed her expression a little.

“Well then, let’s wish for master and the others’ victory and safety and wait in the castle.”

We nodded at Merce-san's words.

I should also stop selfishly insisting to go fight together with them and just wish for their safety.

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—Outsider POV—

Head of the Vampire Clan's main family, Pylkkänen Vlad.

Ravio Vlad.

Working underneath them were 50 B-minus ranked mages belonging to the Vampire clan's main family.

Besides those, there were over 950 mercenary adventurers hired from the Adventurers' Guild.

In total there were about 1000 people.

On the other hand, the Count's family were headed by Count Dan Gate Vlad, and Seras Gate Vlad.

The Head of Guards Gigi, Head Butler Merry, Head Chef Malcolm.

Alongside over 40 other servants.

50 people in total.

The difference in power was by a factor of 20.

しかし伯爵側は誰１人悲観しておらず、悲壮感は全く無い。

But nobody on the Count's side was pessimistic, no one was feeling grim.

むしろ余裕の態度を崩さなかった。

In fact, they did not lose their composure.

The place where they were to face off was a plain about 2 hours away from the town where Lute went to find presents.

The Demon Race don't interfere with each others' family matters.

But it's another matter if they cause trouble for the other families.

Therefore it's a matter of manners that when some family matter occurs, care is taken so that they don't cause trouble for the other clans. That's why an open place with no people was chosen.

"You did well to come and not run away you stupid brother! This time we'll stop your treasonous acts against the Vampire clan! Prepare to be judged!"

The fat eldest brother Pylkkänen, clad in pointlessly extravagant armor and riding a white horned-horse, raised an angry voice.

The lanky second brother Ravio beside him gave an exaggerated nod at what he said and put on a vulgar expression.

"By 'treason' do you mean using the family's money improperly like last time? Calling my magic schooling funds 'improper' is…… Anyway, wasn't I allowed double the money under the pretext of family assistance in the first place?"

"Sh, shut up! Don't think your crime is forgiven just by returning the money!"

"It is just as elder brother says!"

"Really, you guys are persistent as usual. Enough already, why can't you just leave me alone."

The Count breathed a sigh of amazement.

By doing that, he angered them even further.

“Y-You have always been that way since way back! Even though you’re just a third born, you got a magician’s license and attaining a top-notch rank of A ranked. You’re just the younger brother! Know your place! Get him, punks!”

At the cue of Pylkkänen’s yelling, the soldiers started running.

All the magicians started chanting their spells.

“My older brothers never change.”

The Count raised one hand toward everyone and walked out alone.

As if he’s saying “I’ll do it myself so stand back.”

The lump of muscle over 2.5 meters in height naked above the waist walked out.

The magicians of the main Vampire house simultaneously fired their magic at the Count.

Blades of ice, spears of fire, arrows of water, whips of wind—either because they wanted to test things or because they didn’t want to hurt the soldiers, elementary-level attack magic rained down on the Count.

“Hahahahaha! Humm, you’re better trained that before. I’m impressed!”

Bathed under the rain of magic attacks, the Count steadily walked on.

His body did not even receive a millimeter of scratches.

“Drop dead!”

The soldiers finally reached the Count

One of them swung a large sword at him.

The Count wasn’t even noticing.

"……Ha?"

The large sword easily broke like a toy as it came into contact with the Count.

He was alright, of course.

"Hahahahahaha! You still have a long way to go! Your steps are too naive! Even my Lute is stronger than this!"

"Guh!?"

The swordsman was blown off by a flick to his forehead and fell rolling down.

Meanwhile a large axe came swinging down, and a bolt from a bowgun flew to his head. A spear also rushed in, pointed at his stomach.

However, none of them could deal any damage to the Count.

"Well then, it's about time for me to fight back!"

The Count rolled his right hand tightly into a fist and slowly drew it back.

His titanic muscles swelled up further, his veins popping out.

"Hmph!"

flash

The mass of adventurers were blown off by the shockwave from the Count's attack like dry leaves.

Also, the magic barrier that took 10 magicians to create was easily pierced and destroyed by the Count's mana shockwaves.

If Lute were there he would be reminded of bowling in his previous life and yelled out [Strike!]

“Y, you monster!”

Pylkkänen wholeheartedly swore at his younger brother, pale in the face.

His younger brother Dan Gate Vlad was an A-ranked mage.

He possessed a large amount of mana, so much that it would flow out of his body if he was careless, but he himself isn’t fairly skilled in either attack magic or support magic.

For that reason the Count was looked down upon by people around him at first.

Pearls before swine, they said.

However, the Count paid no heed, forging his body as a weapon in order to leave the Demon Continent, gaining abilities, and continuously practicing magic with enthusiasm.

Thanks to that he gained an original means of attack and defence that does not rely on attack nor support magic.

Using the magic power that flows out of his body for defense, and diverting it to attack. He could even project it a long way away like he did just now.

As a result, the Count earned himself the title of an A-ranked mage.

Neither of his elder brothers Pylkkänen nor Ravio had any talent for magic.

In the beginning they made fun of the Count for having a huge amount of mana but not able to use it, but it turned out that their youngest brother became an A-ranked mage.

The “mage” that they longed for since they were children.

The brother they looked down upon became an A-ranked mage that only a handful of geniuses could become.

Jealousy, defeat, envy, inferiority—embittered by various emotions they came to see the Count as if he were the enemy of the family.

If he were somebody else, they wouldn't hate him to that extent.

It's because he was their blood-related brother that they became so madly jealous.

With just one strike, the main family's men became disheartened.

Swords couldn't hurt the Count and even magic had no effect.

Without a way to oppose him, it is inevitable that they could not see victory and morale dropped.

But even the Count had doubts on his superiority.

They must have adapted from the previous battle.

The brothers must have started this war with a scheme or way to secure victory.

Maybe a lethal trap directed at him, or maybe some special magic or treasure-class magic device—he just didn't know what.

The Count carefully observed Pylkkänen's camp.

That backfired on him.

He was late to realize that something happened in his own camp.

—guh…!

His wife Seras screamed, then spat blood

A silver dagger pierced and stuck on her flank through a gap in her armor.

The one who pierced her was—the head of guards, Gigi.

Chapter 035 – Escape

Lute, 12 years old.

The sun has set; it is now the domain of the night.

A few hours ago, the castle fell silent as if the boisterous fun times were a lie.

Chrisse-Ojousama appears to be anxious as she looks out the window.

The visage from not too long ago of the girl who was afraid of going outside was nowhere to be seen.

“Be at ease, Ojou-sama. Since the Master is personally going, our side losing is simply unimaginable.”

Mercè-san gently pats Ojou-sama’s shoulders.

Ojou-sama smiles in agreement.

“… … Ojou-sama, Mercè-san, please be silent.”

I call out the the two who were encouraging each other.

The first floor is strangely noisy.

Flustered voices, wild footsteps, and the like can be heard.

Mercè-san tenses up and holds Ojou-sama close to protect her.

There is knocking on the door.

It is rough.

It is rough to the level that if the head butler, Merry-san, was here, he would have angrily reprimanded whoever it was.

"…..Ojou-sama, Mercè-san, just to be safe, please step back."

As I give out instructions, the two obediently obeys.

And I, just in case, pick up a letter opener.

I slowly reach for the doorknob and open the door.

There is one maid in the hallway.

She peeks inside the room with an impatient expression.

"I, is Ojou-sama here? There is an urgent report that I have to convey!"

"Report? What is it?"

"At present, Merry-san has returned, and the Master and Madam are–"

"!? Ojou-sama, Mercè-san! Take cover!"

"Kyaaaaa!"

The scream of the maid who was in the middle of reporting.

I immediately turn around and throw the paper-knife towards the window!

Right on cue, a man breaks through the 2nd floor window's glass and lands in the room. At the same time, the paper-knife sticks into the enemy's arm.

He had jumped up to the second floor from the courtyard by raising his physical ability with body strengthening magic. Having sensed signs of magic being used outside, I was able to promptly react.

"Guh — !"

The man looks to be in his early twenties.

He has an appearance similar to those of the human race, but since his canines were unusually long, perhaps he is a vampire like Ojou-sama's family.

He pulls out the paper-knife and starts healing.

"Glow in my hand, O soothing light. Be the glimmer that healeth me. Heal!"

He's probably one of the novices scraped up by Master's older brothers and their allies.

Even though the battle isn't over, he was paying an undue amount of attention to healing his wounds. It would appear that he's not accustomed to battle.

The result: he shows a huge opening.

I wasn't trained to be so naive as to overlook such an opening.

Just as Gigi-san had taught me, I quickly move in on the magician.

The male magician panics and swings the paper-knife he pulled out from his arm sideways as a diversion.

Compared to Master, it really wasn't fast or powerful at all.

I duck, easily evading, and throw a reinforced blow at his abdomen.

"Go ho!"

The man is coughing out saliva, falling over in agony.

Still I show no mercy and throw a palm heel strike at his jaw, throwing him out of the window he came in from.

Having been thrown out the window, the man hit the ground and stop moving.

His hands and feet are convulsing, so he probably wasn't dead…

He had merely fainted.

The enemy was a mage, but due to his lack of combat experience, I was able to fight him off.

But why was such a person in the castle?

"I, is Ojou-sama safe, baa~!?"

"Merry-san!"

"!?"

While I was confirming that the male mage I had thrown out had fainted, the head butler Merry-san tumbles into the room, his body full of injuries.

He was supposed to have gone to battle with Master and the rest.

Yet, why did he come back to the castle in such a tattered state?

A bad premonition is swelling in my heart.

But the bad news Merry-san brought with him surpasses even my wildest imaginations.

"Ojou-sama, there is something I must report. In the recent battle, due to the betrayal of our head guard, Gigi, Master was defeated baa~."

" " " !? " " "

Ojou-sama, Mercè-san, and I couldn't believe our ears.

There's no way Gigi-san could have betrayed the Vlad house!

The servants all liked Master and Madam's character and were highly loyal.

And even among them, Gigi-san was special.

He even treasured Ojou-sama as if she were his own daughter.

For such a person to be a traitor, there must be some sort of misunderstanding. It has to be a mistake!

I instinctively press the injured Merry-san for an explanation.

"To think Gigi-san would betray us, could it be some sort of mistake? Perhaps it was a fake impersonating Gigi-san!"

"He's definitely not a fake. He stabbed the Madam with a silver knife, and used its toxicity to force the Master to surrender. Furthermore, he had, at some point, replaced our stock of anti-silver drugs with imitations using his authority as the head guard. With only the enemy in possession of anti-silver drugs, the Master, to save Madam, put on a magic prevention choker and surrendered baa~."

Merry-san looks mortified as tears forms in the corner of his eyes.

"The main family took custody of the Master and Madam and is now marching towards the castle to capture Ojou-sama. I saw an opportunity and was able to escape, but was attacked by pursuers to this pathetic state… … The main family will arrive soon. Ojou-sama, quickly make preparations to escape baa~."

Merry-san's bloodcurdling advice.

However, Ojou-sama still couldn't follow the overwhelming changes in the situation, simply pales, and becomes overcome with surprise.

Instead, Mercè-san starts moving.

"Excuse me, Ojou-sama."

Mercè-san put on a coat made of thick fur for Ojou-sama who had changed out of her party dress and into her pyjamas.

Merry-san gives instructions to the other maid, the one who screamed earlier, to look for a jewel box in Ojou-sama's room.

Furthermore, he grabs my arm with his hands which were still wet with blood.

"Lute, after this, go to the hidden passage that no one other than the Master, Madam, and I know. From there, take Ojou-sama and escape far away baaa~."

"What do Merry-san and the rest intend to do?"

"We will attract the attention of the main family and buy you some time."

I grind my teeth at that reply.

Merry-san tightens his bloody fists.

"Please forgive us for being so worthless that we have to rely on Lute even though you're still just a 12 year-old child. However, right now, the only one that can protect Ojou-sama is Lute. Please, please! Please protect Ojou-sama baa~"

"… … Of course. I will show that I can fulfill my duty as Ojou-sama's butler-cum-blood bag."

"Thank you baa~"

Around the time I finished talking with Merry-san, Ojou-sama's preparations have been completed.

Ojou-sama is still pale, and her eyes aren't focused.

Her mind is still unable to cope with reality.

“Now then, let us go to the dining hall on the first floor.”

Lending the bloody Merry-san a hand, we head toward the 1st floor dining hall.

The dining hall that the Master and Madam always used.

A luxurious, elegant chair in a long table. Massive curtains, gilded candlestands, vases arranged with vibrant flowers — and a hearth that’s a world of difference from that in the servant mess room I usually use.

Merry-san pushs a certain stone brick among the walls in the hearth.

Under the pile of firewood, a linked piece of stone rises.

Merry-san picks up the stone with his trembling hands, and a metal handle comes into view. He lifts the handle with all his might and the floor of the fireplace opens like a lid, revealing a stairway.

Mercè-san entrusts Ojou-sama’s hand to me.

I firmly grasp the delicate hand wrapped in a silk glove.

Furthermore, I am presented with some escape funds wrapped in a leather bag.

“I’m sorry, but since we’re pressed for time, I couldn’t gather a significant amount. Even so, I’ve included some leftover confections from today’s party in the bag. Please eat it on the road.”

“… … Thank you very much. Mercè-san, please be safe, too.”

For a moment, the words “Mercè-san should run away with us” were about to come out.

However, this would only serve to insult her.

Mercè-san’s eyes show that she had made her resolve.

No matter what happened to herself, she intended to buy time for Ojou-sama's escape.

I urge Ojou-sama into the hidden passage.

At that point, her awareness finally caught up to reality for the first time.

"….. tsu!"

Ojou-sama sheds large pearl-like tears and refusesd to move.

She extends her delicate hands and grabs Mercè-san's cuffs.

She tries speaking, but her voice wouldn't come out as she shakes her head.

That she didn't want to be separated, that she didn't want to go — was what her whole body was conveying.

"Ojou-sama, time is of the essence. Please make haste."

"….. tsu!"

"Ojou-sama……"

"….. tsu!"

"Ojou-sama!!!"

"!?"

Mercè-san yells at Ojou-sama.

This is probably the first time she scolded Ojou-sama since she was hired as a maid.

Ojou-sama was frozen by her angry voice.

Mercè-san did a complete 180, and, with an expression filled with affection like that of an older sister or mother, loosened Ojou-sama's fingers that held her.

"For worrying about us, I am truly grateful. But no matter what becomes of us, as long as Ojou-sama is safe, then the bloodline of the Vlad house will not come to an end. So please continue living, no matter how tough life gets. Because Ojou-sama's safety is our sincere desire."

All the servants gathered in the dining hall nods to Mercè-san's words as if to say "my thoughts exactly".

Merry-san further adds on.

"Please leave the matter of the Master and Madam to us. We will save them even if it costs us our lives. Until then, please be safe, Ojou-sama. Now then, Lute, quickly take Ojou-sama to the hidden passage baa~."

"… … Yes. Ojou-sama, your hand please."

Though Ojou-sama still left traces of tears, she took my hand and walked toward the staircase leading to the hidden passage.

For the last time, she took one look back.

"Lute, I leave Ojou-sama to you."

Merry-san left behind those final words and closed the entrance.

A sound echoed as the hidden passage was concealed once more.

All light disappeared.

I concentrated magical power on my eyes and enhanced my night vision.

Leading Ojou-sama by the hand, I descended the stairs.

The hidden passage was an underground excavated tunnel.

Its height was such that a 160cm tall person would be able to touch its ceiling by reaching upwards.

As for its width, it's about as wide as 2 persons' armspan.

It was probably made using magic…

Owing to it not being used at all, the passage was very dusty.

"Ojou-sama, excuse me."

I carried the still crying Ojou-sama and began to walk.

Ojou-sama buried her face on my neck and continued crying.

Warm teardrops wet my skin.

To save magical power, I didn't use any on my arms or legs, and walked with my own power.

— it has probably been about 1 hour. The exit came into view.

Similar to the entrance, a staircase extended with an iron door covering it on its end.

In order to continue carrying Ojou-sama, I concentrated magical power on one arm as I opened the door slowly and while remaining vigilant.

"… … Is this a shed?"

Just like in the castle, the door was made under a hearth.

Still staying vigilant, I examined the surroundings.

The room is dark and shows no signs of life.

There were walls made of logs, some materials left in the corner, and some crude wooden desks, chairs and the like.

We entered the room and I let Ojou-sama sit on a chair.

“I am going to go check the situation outside for a bit, so please wait here for just a moment, Ojou-sama.”

“… … … …”

Without saying anything, Ojou-sama did as she was told and let go of my hand.

I opened the door and went outside to check our surroundings.

We were in a forest.

Looking behind me, I saw that we were in a log cabin; it seems to be a rest stop.

The area surrounding the cabin was fairly open.

I opened a map in my mind.

Thinking of possible locations, there’s none other than the forest behind the castle.

To confirm it, I climbed up a nearby tree.

Needless to say, I enhanced my physical ability using body strengthening.

I enhanced my vision to my limits while I was atop the tree.

I could barely make out the situation in the castle.

Smoke went up like beacons around the castle.

The maids and other servants were running in all directions carrying something that looked like a person wrapped in sheets.

Following that, some men from the main family's side gave chase on horned horses.

Since they don't know which is the real Ojou-sama, they'll be running around until they capture all the servants.

The servants were running on foot with all their might to shake off any pursuit, all just to buy us some time to escape.

Someone who seemed to be Mercè-san raised her hands toward a man.

"They… …"

I subconsciously grinded my teeth in vexation.

However, what I have to do now is not to go and help them.

Also so as to not waste everyone's determination, I will take Ojou-sama to a safe location as quickly as possible.

I promptly descended the tree and returned to the cabin.

Ojou-sama was sitting on a chair while holding her knees, covering her face.

"Ojou-sama, this place is still a danger zone. Let's move locations at once."

"……"

Ojou-sama didn't show any reaction.

I simply said "Excuse me" and carried her again.

Inside the dark forest, relying only on starlight, I began walking towards a town.

Looking back toward the castle, smoke continued rising even now.

Ojou-sama's and my escape continued.

Chapter 036 – Ojousama's Decision

The port town which acts as the entrance to the Demon Continent.
This town is where the slave house is located, the one where I was sold to after being tricked by fake adventurers about a year ago.

I was surveying the streets while wearing hooded cloak.
A group of two blonde-haired young men appeared out of one of the inns.

It's not that they visited the inn because they wanted to stay, but in order to check on the inn's guests.
The other party were probably subordinates of the vampire clan's head.
The person they were looking for — is undoubtedly Chrisse Gate Vlad-ojousama.

Chrisse-ojousama and I arrived here by walking from the woods behind the castle at night.

I had judged that it's better for ojousama's safety that she did not stay in the Demon Continent, but to go to some other continent.

Half a day away by coach.
Taking neither rest nor sleep, but only short breaks in between, I arrived at the town after a day, carrying ojousama in my arms.
When we got hungry we took some snacks left over from Karen's surprise party.

Along the way, ojousama showed little reaction, and only hung her head.
Strange how in just one day the situation could become as different as heaven and earth.

We didn't go find an inn once we arrived in town, but instead headed for the [Rano Slave House] where Master once bought me.
As I feared, the enemy's hands are already working at the inn; and I barely managed to slip ojousama into the slave house.

After confirming the situation outside, I headed back to the slave house.
I went to the back of the house, and made eye contact with the head of guards.

He was the man with a skinhead and a twisted horn growing out of his forehead — Obukhov.

The entrance to the basement at the back of the house was protected and barricaded by him and his men.
I exchanged greetings with them and went down the stairs to the basement.

The fifth day since we ran from the castle.

Ojousama and I were currently in hiding in the basement of Rano slave house.
We're hiding at the room in the basement where I lived about a year ago.

I believe the Vampire house's heads won't consider that we would be hiding in the basement of a slave house instead of an inn.

I slept in the vacant large room, but I had ojousama use a private room.

It's not like they were hiding us out of goodwill either.
It does come with meals, but they made us pay an exorbitant amount as lodging fees.
We managed to pay somehow with the precious metal objects gathered from ojousama's room.
But so long as we're able to pay we can rest at ease.

Because as long as we pay there would be no need for them to betray us.
If they were to sell us out to the Vampire house even after receiving payment from us, they would be instantly branded as untrustworthy by the upper class who has connections to ojousama—not to mention Master.
A merchant won't do something that would damage their credibility.

Without credibility one cannot do business—the words I heard a long time ago came back into mind.

I took the stairs from the basement to the top floor.
I headed for the reception room.

Inside the room there was “a leather sofa, a table made of insect shell, and a thick desk.”
There were no windows, but there were potted plants put in its stead and there was a scenic painting to dampen the stifling atmosphere.
There were also elegant furniture arranged in a well calculated manner.

There was a two-legged frog inside the room.
He was the owner of this Rano Slave House, Rano Merumeru.
He welcomed me with a friendly attitude completely unbefitting his appearance.

“Hiya Lute, how’s the town?”
“Guards are posted at the harbor and the inns and the town gates as usual. Nowadays they seem certain that we’re in this town so they’re running a thorough search. I wonder if they heard word about someone seeing me or something….”

When I looked at him he shrugged his shoulders.

“There’s only a few places where kids can go by walking from the Vlad house. Even I would expect you to head to another continent through this town. If you went to another harbor town they would have caught up with you after all. There’s just no way any of us would leak news about your presence”
“……I know, right.”

I tried baiting him, just in case.
I expected as much.
Which is why I hid in their blind spot and laid low in the basement of a slave house.

“Then, about the matter of smuggling us abroad, were you able to find a ship?”
“Of course, but there will naturally be a cost. You wanted to go to the Fairy-Human Continent, so for two people it will be about this much.”

“You must be kidding, right! No matter how much I work, I can’t pay that kind of money for two people!”

The amount of money Rano cited was outrageous
You could build a small house with that kind of money

He stroked his frog head.

“Every continent is fussy about illegal immigrants nowadays. Besides, even if you say we’re helping the Vlad house, we’re still clearly making enemies of the Vampire house. For that I think this amount of money is appropriate, no?”

Despite his friendly tone and attitude he’s totally taking advantage of us.
As expected from a merchant who handles slaves.

But there’s just no way ojousama and I could just go out in the open and follow the normal procedures for getting into another continent.
I can already see us getting found by the Vampire house’s lackeys in the middle of doing that.

So, there’s no way other than something illegal like smuggling.

“If not the Fairy Human Continent, then I can get you to the neighboring Dragon Continent for this much.”
“Dragon Continent, huh……”

With a timing that seemed like he’d been aiming for it all along, Rano presented a compromise.
If it’s the Dragon Continent the money would barely be enough.

The continent next to the Demon Continent, the Dragon Continent.
It’s located where the number [4] was on a clockface.

If we were to cross the border and go to the Dragon Continent, it would lower the chances that the Vampire house could lay their hands on us.

(*If I go to the Dragon Continent and become an adventurer or do manual labor for money, I think I could manage to support ojousama…. Or maybe I could let ojousama go to the Fairy Human Continent by herself… nah.*)

It's too reckless to send the former hikikomori ojousama, who is blind to the ways of the world, all alone to Hod town in the Aljio region where Elle-sensei lives.
There's a very high chance that she'll get tricked and get sold back to the Demon Continent as a slave like I was.
Then, if the head of the Vampire house were to buy ojousama as a slave, she'd be in a terrible state. Therefore, the plan to send ojousama alone to the Fairy Human Continent is rejected.

I told him what I'd carefully considered.

"….. well then, passage for two to the Dragon Continent, please."
"I'll arrange it as soon as the price is paid."
"As a service, please use the funds left over in our current account to cover the remaining fees."
"Well, if it's just that much…"

I finished the negotiations with Rano.
He put on a very merchant-like smile.

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Rano and I went down the basement for a moment.
That was because I left ojousama in charge of the funds.

I knocked on the door to the room where she was.

"Excuse us."

Ojousama was sitting on the bed hugging her knees, with her face buried in her arms.

She had been feeling down like this ever since we slipped out of the mansion.
It wasn't unreasonable.
Not even one night had passed, and a fun surprise party had turned into her parents getting captured as prisoners.

The fact that she herself was being pursued didn't make things any better.
She didn't even have the time to calm her heart.

That she would eat her meals was a relief, at least.

"Ojousama, I'm sorry to disturb your rest. I wish to report our plans from now on."

In order to give ojousama some peace of mind, I explained my plans.
I told her that I was planning on the two of us going to the Dragon Continent.
Once we crossed the country's border, the Vampire main house certainly wouldn't come after us, and our safety can be guaranteed, I stressed.

I thought that with this, she would calm down a bit and I hope maybe she would cheer up

"For that reason I will need ojousama to release the funds you're holding…. will that be alright?"
"……"

However, Ojousama composedly tore up the plan I put forth.

Ojousama raised her face.
It's been a while since I've seen her face.

Her eyes was red from crying, her cheeks were a bit thin.
The color of her skin was bad, and her hair had also lost its sheen.
Her slim limbs looked like they had became thinner.

[I'm not going to the Dragon Continent]

Ojousama wrote in her usual mini blackboard, rejecting my proposal.

As a whole, she had became weaker.
It was a matter of course.
The little girl who had been raised with delicate care had suddenly been thrust into a situation where her future is uncertain. Of course she would weaken.

And yet only the glint in ojousama's eyes did not become weak.
In fact it is shining, it's burning hotter than the sun.

Ojousama wrote on her mini blackboard.

[I'm not running away. Lute-oniichan, let's fight to save father and mother! Let's fight to the bitter end!]
"……eh?"

Ojousama had shifted into a strange gear.

Chapter 037 – To the Dragon Continent

[I'm not running away. Lute-oniichan, fight with me and help father and mother out! Let's fight to the bitter end!]

Seeing my lack of response, Ojousama thrusted her mini blackboard at me again, as if making her point.
For a little girl who was bullied at school to the point of hiding herself at home and not coming out, to suggest something like fighting to the bitter end to save her parents…
I don't know whether to be happy at the growth of her spirit, or to lament her exceedingly reckless character that was just what you'd expect from master and madam's daughter.

Anyway, I should calm Ojousama down first.

"I understand Ojousama's feelings but saving master and madam is impossible with just the two of us"
[We won't know until we try!]
"We *do* know. Please consider our fighting power. Against the Vampire house with over 50 magicians, the two of us non-magicians would stand exactly zero chance of rescuing master."
Ojousama made a bitter face at my sound reasoning.
But she won't budge even an inch.

[Just like how Lute-oniichan defended your precious people from goblins, I also want to protect my precious people… my family!]

I already told her about how I defended children and my important person from goblins before.
As a result Ojousama gained an interest in practice, and part of the reason she was able to escape her hikikomori-ness.
I had never dreamed of it dragging me down like this now

Ojousama continued excitedly

[Then with the travel expenses to the Dragon Continent, buy the magic device oniichan told me about! The AK-47! Since you said it might be able to injure father it must be an amazing magic device isn't it?]
"It is certainly powerful but…. But since it is a rare magic device it is not sold anywhere around here. We can't just buy it."
[Then let's go to where it's sold! Then we'll go to father and mother, Merry-san and Mercè-san — I'll go save my entire family!]

Ojousama excitedly, vigorously tightened her hand into a fist.

I never knew that Ojousama had this kind of belligerent character all along. Ah, I shouldn't have told her about the AK-47 — I want to go back and beat up the me that thought it would be fine to tell her that day.

"I'm sorry, but is this [AK-47] Ojousan was talking about, the magic device that [uses explosion magic to fling a small bit of metal a distance away to wound and kill the enemy]?"

Unexpectedly, Rano interrupted my and Ojousama's conversation.
Moreover, from the way he speaks he seems to know the name of [AK-47]!
No way!?
How in this world did he get to know the name [AK-47]!?

He saw our reaction, and started speaking at his convenience.

"I wonder if the two of you know about the [Magic Stone Princess]."
"Magic Stone Princess?"

I tilted my head in doubt.
Ojousama, who at one time had walked the path of magic devices, started explaining.

[As a magician, she is a genius regarding magic devices. The [Rainbow Sword] that she made while she was schooling in the Dragon Continent University was a groundbreaking invention that overturned the conventional wisdom about magic stones.]

The Prism sword is — A sword that could change attributes by swapping over fire, water, wind, and other magic stones.

At that time, the established theory is that one can't swap over attribute magic stones that had been implanted.
The Magic Stone Princess overturned that and made a magic sword that could swap over attribute magic stones.

Since then, she had been called the [Magic Stone Princess] by magic stone professionals.

"Recently she had been developing a [Focused Mana Charging Method] that could shorten the time to charge up magic stones from 30 days to 15 days, and raised her fame further."

Ojousama heard Rano's story and made an astonished expression.
As someone who had her eyes on magic devices, she would certainly understand how hard it is to shorten the charging time by half.

I pressed Rano for more

「それでその『魔石姫』の話と『ＡＫ４７』がどう繋がるんですか？」
"So what relation would this [Magic Stone Princess] have to the [AK-47]?"

"That person told merchants that she would pay any price asked for information about [Metal-flinging Magic Devices] [AK-47] and [M-10]. All the merchants got greedy and gathered news about those and objects that they think may be one of those to send to her, but mostly they got the wrong things and rather than reward, they received angry words in return."

Somehow he seems to be troubled and caressed his head.

"I also tried collecting information, but somehow some other merchant seems to have seen a girl having something similar in the Fairy Human Continent Magic School. But no matter how much he tried to pay her she won't let go of the [Metal-flinging Magic Device]. However, just the news of her seemed to have fetched quite a price."

"Could it be that that Magic School Student's name is [Snow]?"

"Yes yes. So you *do* know something. Would you care to tell me about her if you do? If you know something good about this Snow person we might be

able to buy that thing off of her. If we could we'll be well rewarded you know. In fact, I could transport you two to the Fairy Human Continent for free. The reward money from the Magic Stone Princess would be more than enough to cover that cost after all."

"Know her? This "Snow person" is my fiancée.."
"F, fiancée! Is that true!?"

Rano made an astonished face at my answer.

[…. Lute-oniichan, has a fiancée?]
"Yes, she's my childhood friend from the orphanage we grew up in."

When she heard my answer Ojousama's battle fever from before died out for some reason, and she tightly held her chest, with her eyes downcast.

As I tried to talk to Ojousama, I was cut off by Rano's agitated questioning

"If what Lute said is true, then I'm a very lucky person! If I brought Lute to the Magic Stone Princess she's going to reward me well!"
"Oh, I'm very sure she'd be willing to pay even more."

I denied Rano's monologue.

"After all, that [Metal-flinging Magic Device] was made by me."

With that, it was decided where Ojousama and I would go.
To the Dragon Continent where the Magic Stone Princess lives—.

Chapter 038 – Magic Stone Princess – First Part

The Dragonian Kingdom that governs the Dragon Continent.
Among the 5 races, the dragon race is the one and only race that lives here.

Completely contrary to the demon race; there are absolutely no other races.

It's because they're so proud of their own race that they're known as the one race with the highest pride among the 5 races.

And in that Dragon Continent, there is an extremely famous person: the magic tool inventor, Meiya Dragoon.

At 3 years old, Meiya could speak and write in multiple languages, as well as learned all sorts of mathematical binary functions.
She also had talent as a magician, having reached B-minus rank at the age of 15.
When she entered the magic tool department in a magic university, she skipped grades and graduated within a year.
At that time, she invented the Rainbow Sword.

In those days, it was believed to be impossible for one weapon to switch between multiple types of magic stones.
However, by combining various metals and magical inscriptions, she made it possible.

Due to this invention, this discovery, her name spread worldwide.
Since then, she had become known as the "Magic Stone Princess" to many.

Meiya's pride was, even among the dragon race, exceptionally high.
Nevertheless, the extent of her resourcefulness, beauty, status, prestige and wealth garnered looks of admiration from the populace of the Dragon Continent.

If limited to within the Dragon Continent she is as famous as the King himself.

There are even rumors of Meiya being in a relationship with the Dragonian Kingdom's first prince.
Speaking of the prince, his ability as a magician is certain and he wears a well-mannered, skillful mask. However, there is a facet of him that tends to somewhat go out of control. Nevertheless, he is popular with the people.

Since Meiya's parents were influential nobles, the two were actually childhood friends who've known each other since they were very young.
But the truth about the rumors is that it's simply the first prince's unrequited feelings.

One day, the publicly acknowledged genius Meiya, came across a curious item.
The S&W M10 revolver and a box of .38 Special rounds.

Meiya was in her estate's parlour listening to the merchant who brought it.
According to the merchant — it would seem that it was a "a miraculous magic tool seemingly created by a heavenly god".

Even dexterous craftsmen from the dwarves couldn't manufacture such an elaborate thing, or so the merchant asserted.

And exactly because it's such a magnificent magic tool, he first and foremost brought it to the world's best magic tool inventor: Meiya — the merchant flattered as such.

(You only brought it to me, a known magic tool dilettante, since you thought you could rip me off, anyways… since you would only get a paltry sum from those nobles in the magic schools who strikes a hard bargain.)

However, though she was a dilettante, she's no mere amateur.
She's a publicly acknowledged genius in magic tool development.
Did he really think herself willing to buy inferior magic tools?

Meiya scoffed at the merchant's sales pitch and crossed her legs.

However, without noticing the scornful look in Meiya's eyes, the merchant moved to the garden to demonstrate the ability of the S&W M10 revolver.
With a memo with its name and usage instructions in one hand, the merchant started explaining its functions.

The merchant shot a previously prepared brick from about 5 meters away. Splendidly, the bullet smashed the brick.
The merchant continuously destroyed bricks one brick after another.

Arms crossed and being waited upon by a guard-cum-servant, Meiya who was watching in an arrogant attitude was surprised by the S&W M10's power, performance, rapid-fire capability, and so on, becoming unable to stand up on the spot due to collapsing from the shock.

All the maids on the scene rushed to her.

Though Meiya was still frozen on the spot, unable to stand for such a magnificent magic tool, she immediately made the purchase without questioning the merchant's unreasonable price.
Furthermore, she wanted to buy any other goods of the same series that the merchant has for sale, as well as any information on its creator.

According to the merchant, there is one other similar magic tool, but he couldn't come to an agreement with the person who brought it about the price, so it seems it was brought to some other merchant.

Meiya was–

"Money isn't an issue. Find the other similar magic tool and gather information on its creator at once!"

The merchant received payment for the revolver and rushed out of the Meiya estate in a hurry.

While Meiya was waiting for the similar magic tool and information on its creator, she immediately researched the revolver in her workshop.

First, with the memo that came with it in one hand, she confirmed its name.

The small metal pipes in the S&W M10 revolver seems to called .38 Special cartridges.

The 6 cartridge rounds are loaded in holes in the part called a cylinder.
Below that is a part called a trigger; it seems bullets fly out when it is pulled.

It seems to be made of magic liquid metal that's harvested by killing metal slimes.

"To be able to create such a divine magic tool using that good-for-nothing magic tool….."

Knowing the material its made from surprised her even more.

Continuing her research — there were too many astonishing points: the cylinder that internally shifts whenever the trigger is pulled, small parts that cannot possibly be made with our present level of metallurgy, the means in which grooves were carved into the interiors, etc.

"This cartridge is a splendid item, as well."

She examined the empty cartridge in detail.

It appears that explosion magic is sealed within these small pipes, activated by the trigger and hammer operating together conferring a strong impetus to its rim.
Then, the mechanism is such that the small piece of metal inside the pipe would be propelled out — she determined as such.

To produce such a magic tool that uses so little to achieve maximum efficacy… the person who made this is a genius above even me!

Meiya Dragoon, who was exceptionally prideful even amongst the prideful dragon race, recognized the creator of the S&W M10 as a genius without a hint of hesitation.

If someone who knew her were there, they would probably faint while foaming at the mouth at the overwhelmingly shocking scene.
She was that prideful.

Without delay, Meiya ordered some magic liquid metal and tried to reproduce an S&W M10 herself.
However…

"… … this isn't going well at all. Was the S&W M10 really made of this stuff, I wonder?"

On the very same day that Meiya got her hands on the magic liquid metal, she started shutting herself in one of her home's workshops to try and begin production, but she was completely unable to make progress.

In the first place, 'magic liquid metal' is an item obtained by defeating the monster known as metal slime.

Magic liquid metal is a special metal with a unique characteristic that if one touches it while imagining a weapon and pumps magic into it it will take the shape of said weapon.

It has the merit of being easy to carry around in small quantities.
For that reason, it's a magic tool favored by assassins.

Its demerit is that once it's fixed into a certain form, it cannot revert back into its liquid form.
Without a clear image if you made a sword, it would be blunt; armor would have uneven thickness, and even its size would be wrong.
It is only situationally useful; difficult to handle; being a magic tool, expensive.
An item that has become synonymous with the words 'unpopular commodity'.

Meiya's judgment is that it's something that she can't help but hesitate to even call it a magic tool.

Magic liquid metal is so unpopular that nobody conducts research on it. As such, using magic liquid metal, how such strength was achieved; how such elaborate parts were produced; and howgrooves were engraved in the tube's interior… she was frankly unable to comprehend.

Meiya temporarily paused production using magic liquid metal.
With a different approach, she was going to once again try producing an S&W M10.

She requested a skilled dwarf engineer, whom she is the patron of, to make the iron tubes.
She decided to try using a rod to forcibly shave off interior grooves in the pipes in post-production.

The S&W M10's structure is complex, but the underlying concept is simple.
It was simply explosion magic propelling a piece of metal inside a tube.

Although she couldn't really understand how the cartridges' explosion magic could be activated just from getting struck by the hammer… … …
Even though she couldn't find traces of any special magic being applied on the hammer…

Prototype #1 was completed before long.

It had the appearance of a short metal tube. Wood was attached beneath it for support.
Given that she didn't know how the hammer activated the explosion magic in the cartridge, the butt of the tube was made to be openable courtesy of a metal lid.
A small piece of magic stone was installed and magical inscriptions were engraved in this breech.

It's set up so that if one were to chant the preset incantation while touching the breech, the explosion magic charged into the magic stone would activate.

A metal ball loaded through the muzzle is used as ammunition.
It was properly made to be the same shape as the bullets used for the S&W M10.

Meiya had thought of the possibility of an accident happening, so she fixed Prototype #1 onto an apparatus she prepared on the courtyard.
About 2 meters ahead, a brick had been placed as a target.

Without delay, she crammed a bullet into the muzzle.

“Hmmm, looks like the size doesn’t fit. Bring me a different one.”

As per Meiya’s instructions, a maid brought out several bullets spread out on a tray.
On top of the tray was a cushion, and the bullets were placed on top of that so as to not let them roll around.

Eventually, after the third prototype, she used a rod to cram a bullet in.
The magic stone was already charged with explosion magic.

Meiya attached a metal thread which could transmit magical power onto the breech, and took a distance of approximately 5 meters.
By forcing magical power through the metal thread, it would be as if she was touching the metal lid directly.

Once everything was set up, Meiya gleefully chanted the incantation.

“Explode!”

BOOM!

“Kyaa!?”

Prototype #1’s body literally exploded.

“Meiya-sama! Are you safe!?”
“Uh, yes, I’m all right”

For the second time, the maids gathered around Meiya who was on her behind, unable to stand due to surprise.

Meiya borrowed their hand to stand up, and approached the spot where the now-exploded Prototype #1 was placed.

The tube’s body exploded from its base.
The metal bits were torn into long thin slices.
The magic stone affixed onto the lid was also smashed.

Somehow or other, the explosion magic was released in an airtight condition. The magic stone couldn't handle the shock and became damaged, causing the stockpiled magical power within it to be released.
As a result of the explosion magic combined with the magic stone's power running wild; the tube's body couldn't handle the strain, became damaged, and things went to shit.

"For me of all people to… … even though it's something so obvious if I had just given it some thought."

Furthermore, adding insult to injury, the fired bullet was found in a completely different direction from the target.
The brick target wasn't even grazed in the slightest.

The rifling marks on the bullet were distorted halfway.
It's probably because the internal grooves were crooked.
As a result, the bullet did not fly straight.

With regard to the grooves… "in adding rotation to the bullet, it would stabilize its flight". Meiya raised such a hypothesis.
It followed the same principles as fletchings on arrows.

She had thought that it was an important part which was needed to gyroscopically stabilize the bullet, so she made it carefully. But the result was this sad sight.

However, she had no intention of blaming the dwarf who she had requested to produce it.
After all, for a first prototype, she had made rash demands such as digging out grooves inside the metal pipe…

"What I understood from actually trying to make prototype models…… the only I understood is that this S&W M10 is truly an extraordinary magic tool."

For argument's sake, let's assume that the Prototype #1 Meiya made was put to practical use.
Even supposing the main body could withstand the explosion magic, the damage to the magic stone couldn't be prevented.

For a magic stone of that size, depending on quality, it would cost about 1 – 5 silver coins (10,000 – 50,000 Japanese Yen) per stone.

To use magic stones as disposables on a magic tool that can't even accurately hit a target from 2 meters away is insane.

And yet, without using magic stones, the S&W M10 could fire multiple shots in succession, and with excellent accuracy, to boot.
Completely unable to understand how it was made, Meiya was at her wits' end for a while.

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Several months after purchasing the S&W M10, and after failing in researching on reproducing it, the merchant who sold the revolver came bringing a similar magic tool and information on the creator.

Same as last time, they were in the parlour.
The merchant respectfully places a tube that was bigger and longer than the revolver.

Apparently, this magic tool was called an "AK-47".

Meiya didn't even bother haggling and bought the AK-47 and the information on its creator with at the merchant's asking price.

The first thing she did after the merchant left was look at the papers holding information on the creator.

The S&W M10 and AK-47's creator's name is Lute.
Raised in an orphanage in Hod of the Aljio region in the Fairy Human Continent.

It seems the merchant got lucky and came across and asked a former resident of Hod.

Lute had been a genius since he was in the orphanage, having learned to speak, read & write as well as basic arithmetic at the age of 3.
At 5 years old, he developed toys such as Reversi and sold the rights to it to a merchant. With the funds procured from that, he set aside a part of it to buy magic liquid metal for the development of the S&W M10 and AK-47.

At 10 years old, he graduated from the orphanage.
After taking a Level II quest as an adventurer, it is likely that he died fighting against a monster.
There was no corpse, not even bones. Suspected that it was already eaten by a monster.

“This can’t be… To think the creator is already dead.”

Meiya was dejected.
For the holder of such talent to die at the age of 10… for such a thing to have happened…
How could the gods do such a cruel thing?

Next, she performed some test firing with the newly bought AK-47.

Same as last time, she went to the courtyard.
The maids placed down some bricks to be targets.

Meanwhile, Meiya looked over the instructions for the AK-47.
It would seem that it was a magic tool made to be able to shoot more bullets than the revolver.

“Certainly, it makes sense…”

After shooting six shots with the revolver, one would have to take out the cartridges from the cylinder and reload it.
However, the AK-47 had something called a “magazine” which was loaded with 30 shots. Also, it seems that reloading could be done simply by replacing the magazine.

Meiya understood that, with this, one could fire a lot of bullets like those from the revolver; but with a much higher capacity.

Since preparations for the brick targets were done, test firing was about to begin.
”Full automatic”, which according to the memo was for firing a large number of bullets

“Here goes nothing.”

She grasped the grip without pressing the stock against her shoulder, and fired while just holding onto the checker ring.

“Kyaaa!?”

Surprised by the recoil from the 7.62mm x Russian shots, she was once again on her behind due the full automatic’s rapid-fire.
She lost her grip on the AK-47 and it tumbled onto the ground.

Meiya turned pale.
Because she imagined that the bullets would shoot out the same way as with the revolver, the AK-47’s full auto completely took her by surprise.
She was, once again, clueless as to its structure that allowed it to fire so quickly in succession.

It was even less comprehensible than the S&W M10’s structure.

In the first place, the concept of such a magic tool didn’t exist in this world.
That’s why she was all the more confused.

(This alien-like magic tool design orientation was created by a mere 5-year-old child!? Th.. That’s impossible!)

However, the real thing was right before her eyes.
Meiya looked at the AK-47 as if it were a cursed magic tool created by a devil king.

But even more than the unpleasant thought, the realization that her talents could never match up to Lute, the genius who created this magic tool, was painfully clear.

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Ever since the day when she test-fired the AK-47, Meiya's was greatly wounded and she drowned herself in alcohol in order to escape from reality.

Scattered around the bed in her room was a large quantity of wines, spirits, liqueur, and the like.

"There's no more alcohol… Quick, bring me more alcohol…"
"Me, Meiya-sama… any more than is bad for your health."

"Tsu! Me, to that inventor! Are you saying I'm inferior to Lute!?"
"Hii!"

Meiya threw an empty alcohol bottle at the servant.
Since she was drunk, her aim was a mess and the bottle smashed into the wall.

The maid ran out of the room with a pale face.

"Ri, right away ma'am!"
"… hmph."

While waiting for the maid to bring back some alcohol, Meiya collapsed onto the bed.
When the maid came back with alcohol, she snatched it away.

"Gulp, gulp"

With alcohol in hand, she forced practically all of it down her throat, some of it spilling.

And thus, she continued spending her days mostly drinking alcohol.

Not just the maids, but also people from outside the mansion were despondent for Meiya.
She was no longer the genius magic tool inventor that they knew.

“Past the age of 20, you are just another person”. While this parallel world didn’t have such a saying, but nobody doubted that her talent had withered.

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One morning, such as she was, a revelation came… she came to realize the reason she was born into this world.

She realized that with the limited talent she was endowed with, her role was to make sure that the name and great exploits of the true genius who created the S&W M10 and AK-47 would be known by future generations.

Once she realized that, she was quick to act.
She ordered a maid to clean up her room and prepare a hot bath.

Dipping her body in steaming hot bath water washed away any alcohol left in her body.

She brought the S&W M10 and AK-47 to her workshop and immediately started her research.

She started her analysis of the S&W M10 and AK-47’s structure anew.

Since the revolver’s basic structure is quite simple, making a replica shouldn’t be impossible.
The problem is the AK-47.
Even now, she couldn’t understand the principle behind its ability to fire so many bullets so quickly.

Even though she would like to disassemble the AK-47, it would be troubling if it turns out she couldn’t reassemble it.

Now that God Lute, the true genius, is dead; another AK-47 will never appear again in this world.

Before starting on the actual thing, she decided to start off her research on the cartridges.
If she could only understand how the explosion magic charged inside the cartridge was activated by the hammer, the need to use magic stones as disposables would disappear.

Thus, she restarted her observations on an empty cartridge.

Explosion magic is sealed up inside a small pipe; when its butt is stimulated, a small piece of metal flies out.
A concept that didn't exist until now.
Furthermore, its power was at a level where it could easily kill.

For example, if it comes to be that mass-production of AK-47s and cartridges is possible, even non-magicians could overthrow a country if they got hold of it.
The existence of the magic tool created by God Lute once again sent shivers down her spine.

"It seems that this sealed space is an important part of the cartridge, huh…"

By causing an explosion within the sealed space, it maintains the impact's directivity and thus, it attains its propulsive force.
It's by maintaining that directivity that the piece of metal can sublimate to a level where it can kill creatures.

It's a new concept where one maintains directivity on scattered energy.

She still didn't know the method in which the hammer activated the explosion magic within the cartridge, but…

"… … I wonder if this concept can't be applied using magic stones."

Truly a train of thought befitting the Magic Stone Princess.

As a result, she started dedicating half her research time trying to establish a means to incorporate magical power through magic stones… she called it the [Focused Mana Charging Method].

Putting a magic stone inside the metal tube, she held up both hands.
The mouth of the tube was widened, and it became narrower to its butt. It looked like a funnel.
The interior's surface was smeared with a special chemical that perfectly reflects magical power.
Thanks to that, when magical power is transmitted, the amount that leaks without being absorbed by the magic stone is drastically reduced.

Magical tool inventors everywhere praised Meiya for this innovation that overshadowed the rainbow sword that she invented in the magic university.

The people who propagated the rumor that "Meiya's talents had withered" all quieted down.
And people lionized her, saying "Meiya Dragoon is the greatest magic tool inventor in history".

However, it was impossible for Meiya to be sincerely pleased with that evaluation.
She had simply stolen the idea from the true genius, the god, Lute.

Also, at the same time she was conducting analysis on the S&W M10 and AK-47, she was collecting information.
She had asked the merchant who brought her the S&W M10 and AK-47, as well as other merchants, to search for similar items in the world.

She recruited help in collecting information without minding the costs.

However, having caught hold of such talk, sly merchants and vice individuals swarmed toward Meiya as ants toward sugar.
Needless to say, the information and goods they brought were all fake.

Though they were counterfeits that simply imitated outward appearance, the resemblance was disgustingly uncanny, so she had her hopes up.
However, she was able to immediately tell they were fakes as soon as she picked them up.

Such days of parsing through a large amount of jumbled information continued, until one day a plausible piece of information came.

Someone who grew up in the same orphanage as Lute… of the Beast race's White Wolf tribe, a girl named Snow apparently owned a magic tool similar to the S&W M10 revolver.
It was said that she was studying in a magic school in the Fairy Human Continent at the moment.

According to the merchant who brought in the information, he approached her to try and buy the magic tool, but he wasn't even given the time of day.
So he visited Meiya in the hopes that she would at least buy this information for a high price.
Naturally, she only paid the merchant as much the price for the information.

Meiya instantly made up her mind to go to the Fairy Human Continent to visit the aforementioned magic school.
However, a one-way trip from the Dragon Continent to the Fairy Human Continent would take at least half a year by ship.
A round-trip would take approximately one year.

But she was one of the few people in the world who owned a private airship.

Her private airship looked visually like a regular ship, but it used a large quantity of magic stones to float.
With this, even a trip that would usually take half a year could be completed in approximately one short month.

Without delay, in order for her to meet and directly negotiate with Snow, Meiya set her sights on a certain magic school in the Fairy Human Continent.

Chapter 039 – Magic Stone Princess – Last Part

“Magic Stone Princess” — Meiya, a magician from the Dragon Continent, finally arrived at the magic school in the Fairy Human Continent after a bit more than a month.

She was staying in a certain town close to the magic school.
Naturally, it was at the most expensive inn’s most spacious room.

She was going to go to the magic school from the town by coach.

Due to its nature, magic schools were built on wide open spaces.
There were regulations against building private houses on its periphery.

It was to avoid causing damage to the surrounding area during the training of magic.

This magic school was made of stone like a fortress with student accommodation built around it.
Furthermore, its circumference was enclosed by two-layered walls.

While it was also made to defend from external effects, but its main purpose is to defend against magic attacks from inside.

Meiya’s coach stopped at an established guard station on the outer wall.
The driver of the rented coach got into a fight with the guard.
It seems like since they came without a letter of introduction, they couldn’t go in… so refused the guard.

The driver who was hired on-site pointed toward the coach and asked the guard to talk directly with his employer.
With a troubled expression, the guard knocked on the coach door.

The maid who came along to take care of Meiya was about to deal with the situation, but was stopped by Meiya.
It seems Meiya intended to personally talk with the guard.

The maid respectfully opened the door.

The guard inquired while scratching his head:

“Uhh… I’m sorry, but it’s the rules that unless you’ve made arrangements to meet a family member or otherwise own a permit, I can’t let you in. If it’s acceptable, could you schedule an appointment and come again at a later date?”

The guard spoke in a businesslike manner.
That attitude annoyed Meiya.
Even though it wasn’t on purpose, his speech was inappropriate considering he was talking to this Meiya, the world-famous genius.

She ordered the guard at point blank range.

“Tell the headmaster that Meiya Dragoon has come. He will understand with just that.”
“Me… Meiya Dragoon…!? You are the Magic Stone Princess!?”

It seems he was not a guard for nothing. He even knew her name.

A complete change from his earlier businesslike attitude, he stood at attention and his voice was shaking.

“I, I am terribly sorry. I will set up comms with the headmaster at once, so please wait just a moment.”
“Make it quick.”
“Yes! Right away!”

The guard went back into the station for a short moment, left a message to his colleagues who were on standby, and ran off to the school.

It took about 30 minutes before the guard returned to the coach.

”I, I’m terribly sorry to have kept you waiting! Since the headmaster is currently absent, the principal will be taking his place in receiving you, so please proceed toward the front entrance.”
“Thanks for the trouble.”

After saying those few words, Meiya started moving again on her coach. Passing through the outer and inner wall, she finally arrived at the front entrance.

There, a teacher was already waiting for her.
It was a balding man who seemed to be very nervous.
He stood at attention as he greeted Meiya’s coach.

When Meiya got off the coach, he bowed with a smile while sweating profusely.

“It is an honor to meet you, Meiya Dragoon-sama. I am the teacher in charge of teaching classes on magic tools here. I am Kahlua of the human race.”
“Nice to meet you, Kahlua-san. I apologize for the sudden visit.”
“Not at all. To be able to meet Meiya-sama, the famed magic tool inventor, is a great honor… Now then, speaking while standing here must be uncomfortable. Please, come in.”

When Meiya and her maid entered the school building, they were shown into a parlour.
Inside the room, there was a leather sofa, a table made of insect carapace, flowers arranged in vases, and the walls were lined with paintings. The view from the window isn’t that magnificent since this was the first floor, though. It was an exceedingly ordinary parlour.

A woman who seemed to be a human race office staff brought some roasted fragrant tea.
When she went out of the room, Kahlua proceeded to talk business while wiping off his sweat with a handkerchief.

“So to what do we owe this honor on this day?”
“I’ve come to meet with a student here, Snow-san, a girl from the Beast race’s White Wolf tribe. Would it be possible to call her over?”
“S.. Snow-san!? What did she do this time!?”
“This time?”

Meiya reflexively inquired in response to Kahlua's agitation.
While wiping off his even more abundant amount of sweat, he flusteredly explained.

"She is an excellent student… perhaps too excellent. As it is, she's often gets involved with trouble. Completely overwhelmng 100 soldiers from a freshman's private army; counterattacking upper class aristocratic men who approached her; single-handedly crushing adventurers who were, for some reason, hired by a merchant… ju, just remembering it all makes my stomach…"
"Oh my… these merchants certainly exist… how rude of them."

Meiya nonchalantly offered her sympathies
No matter how you slice it, that last merchant was definitely one of the people who acted because of her request.

"I understand what you're saying. However, there is something that I simply must talk to Snow-san about. So could you please call her over now?"
"I… I understand. Though I think she's probably in class right now, I'll call her over right now."

Kahlua left his seat and left the parlour at a brisk pace.
Meiya and her maid waited for roughly 10 minutes.

The sound of a knock.
After Kahlua, one female student showed up.

Lily-white skin, large pupils, and eyelashes long enough to be a shadow.
Her long silver hair was held up in a ponytail, and similarly colored wolf ears sometimes slightly moved.
She was a charmer who was beautiful like a spirit of the snow, yet also cute at the same time.

A metal bracelet she wore on her left arm reflected the sunlight coming in through the window.

But what was most eye-catching were the huge breasts that this magic school student was showing, which couldn't be hidden even by a mantle.
A beautiful cute charmer, yet also the owner of huge breasts; this unbalance probably tickles male instincts.

Even the upper class aristocratic male students, who were not want for women, would want to court her.

With her right hand on her chest and left hand just barely lifting her skirt, Snow bowed her head.
A prim and proper salutation.

“Greetings, Meiya-sama. I am Snow of the Beast race’s White Wolf tribe.”
“My apologies for calling you while you were busy. Please have a seat, Snow-san.”
“Excuse me.”

Snow sat across from Meiya.
Her teacher, Kahlua, sat down next to her.

“Since I dislike pointless courtesies, I will get straight to the point. Could you please hand over the magic tool you have in your possession? Of course, I am willing to offer a reasonable sum as remuneration.”
“Magic tool…..?”

Snow openly sighed when she realized what Meiya meant.

“Dragoon-sama, too? Recently, I’ve been bothered by the many people who came wanting me to sell them the magic tool that Lute-kun made. It’s something that is very precious to me, so I won’t sell it no matter how much you offer.”
“About that, please, I beg you! I’m willing to pay any amount!”
“There’s no room for negotiation. If that’s all, then please excuse me.”
“Please wait!”

In a panic, Meiya pursued Snow who left her seat.
However, as the “Magic Stone Princess”, she did not know restraint and left the room.
Touching upon her pride, her tongue unintentional slipped.

“Lute-sama was eaten by a monster and is already dead!”

Snow’s feet were frozen.
Meiya’s mouth didn’t stop.

“That’s why, that magic tool isn’t something someone like you who doesn’t even know its value should own. To leave behind those achievements for the future, someone like me should — huh!?”

Snow turned around, and, at the same time, pressed the S&W M10 2-inch’s muzzle onto Meiya’s forehead.

Meiya couldn’t perceive Snow’s movements as she drew her revolver at all. As she turned around, before anyone noticed, Meiya was already held at gunpoint… only its result remained.

“Lute-kun is dead? Stop lying. That Lute-kun couldn’t possibly have been killed by a monster. Why would you tell such a lie…?”

Emitting undeniable bloodlust, Snow cocked the percussion hammer.

Ironically, that showed that it was different from the counterfeits that was brought to her so far.
However, Meiya, who understood what the raised hammer meant, let out a small “Hiii” sound.

A period that felt like an eternity… … though it was actually only roughly 10 seconds before Snow uncocked the hammer and re-placed the gun underneath her mantle.

“Excuse me.”

She bowed politely and left the parlour.

Meiya who had just narrowly escaped death fell on her knees right there.

“Meiya-sama!?”
“Princess!”

Kahlua and the maid who were left behind rushed over in a panic to Meiya who was sitting on the floor.
Tears of fear had formed in her eyes.

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“Annoying! Annoying! Annoying! I definitely won’t forgive that woman!”

Meiya rode her airship for a bit more than a month to get back home.
However, her anger toward Snow did not settle at all.

She is the world-famous Meiya Dragoon.
The Dragon race were very prideful, but she was even more prideful.

Grumbling in her own bed, she scattered about in frustration while holding her pillow.
Sitting up, an evil face was reflected.

“I wonder how I should snatch away that revolver…… Should I make necessary preparations behind the scene and put pressure on the magic association and magic school? Or perhaps I should hire a first-rate thief to steal it, then…..”

While she was considering a few ideas, knocking sounds resounded.
A maid entered when she called out.

“Excuse me. A merchant is here claiming to have brought Lute, the one who made those magic tools. What should I do?”
“…. Sigh. Another one.”

Even though the increase in the number of merchants who visit her was caused by her own request for information and goods… there has been two merchants who intrude on her to try and swindle her in the past.
They brought a child slaves of fitting characteristics, claiming them to be the magic tool’s creator, Lute, and trying to wangle out a reward money.

However, since the children they brought couldn’t make an S&M or AK-47 when given magic liquid metal, they were seen through before long.

Meiya asked her childhood friend, the Dragonian Kingdom’s first prince, to throw both swindling merchants into jail on the account of attempted fraud.

Such a stupid trick wouldn't work; it was a threat as such towards other merchants.

Yet this is already the third time.
Another fool who doesn't learn has come.

"….. Since they've come all this way, I'll meet them to distract myself. Bring them to the parlour."
"As you wish."

The maid bowed and returned to meet the merchant and his companions.
Prey for Meiya to relieve her stress on came at just the right time, and she stood up from her bed with a twisted smile on her face.

While Meiya was changing and fixing her appearance with the help of a maid, the merchant and his companions were made to wait in the parlour.

Only the merchant was sitting on the sofa. A blond girl and black-haired boy was standing behind him for some reason.

Meiya had two male servants holding long spears and following her from behind as she made an appearance in the parlour.
With a pompous attitude as if she were the queen, she sat down on the main sofa.

"It is nice to meet you, Meiya-sama. I am a slave dealer working for the Rano Slave House. It is to my understanding that Meiya-sama is currently showing interest in a certain magic tool. As a matter of fact, one of the slaves we are dealing with happens to be its creator, so I brought him over."

The merchant introduced the black-haired boy standing behind him.
Needless to say, his name was Lute.

The blonde girl beside him was Chrisse Gate Vlad, a vampire of the Demon race.

The girl kept shifting her eyes with a frightened expression as she hid behind Lute.

Meiya's eyes were captivated by that girl… by Chrisse.
The girl's attire, hair, and so forth were all dirty from her long journey, but overall was still as lovely as a doll. It made Meiya want to keep her as a pet.
Meiya unintentionally licked her lips.

And then, the black-haired child who claimed to be Lute spoke of the circumstances that led to his becoming a slave.

The S&W and AK-47 were taken away from him when he was deceived by some fake adventurers, and he was then sold as a slave. The proof of that is the mark of slavery tattooed onto his arm.
At present, he had been bought for Chrisse by her father and serves as her blood bag-cum-butler… and so his explanation went.

Meiya was impressed.
Their setting was detailed, and the story was told with such zealousness. A very realistic performance.
If this was the first time she heard such a story, she may have believed it.

Meiya recrossed her legs and slackened her lips in provocation.

"I see, I understand. If he really is Lute, then he should be able to answer any questions regarding the S&W and AK-47, right? If, for example, he's a fake, then…"

The two men behind Meiya struck the floor with their spears threateningly.
Startled, Chrisse trembled like a small animal.
The black-haired boy agreed while covering her behind his back.

"That's fine by me. I will answer any question."

"Then it's decided. The first…. do you know what the S&W and AK-47 are made of?"
"Magic liquid metal obtained from metal slimes."
"Correct…"

“Tell me the name of the ammunition used by the S&W and AK-47.”
“9mm .38 Special rounds and 7.62mm x Russian shots.”
“Correct.”

Up to this point, he had simply answered according to the memo written by “Lute” on how to handle the magic tools.
メイヤは足を組み直す。
Meiya recrossed her legs again.

“Then, next, could you confirm the current conditions of the S&W and AK-47? Of course, if you are their creator, then it shouldn’t be a problem, right?”
“Yes, that’s all right.”

The black-haired boy answered in no time.
”It seems he has quite the confidence to try and fool me,” Meiya muttered in her heart.

Meiya told a maid to bring the S&W and AK-47 from her workshop.

The S&W and AK-47 were placed on the table.
しかしこれからはメイヤを騙すためだけに、他の商人が持ち込んだ真っ赤な偽物。
However, this is the point where the other fakes who had tried to deceive Meiya met their downfall.
持ち主ならすぐに分かるはずだ。
The real thing would’ve immediately understood.

He, who is a fake, would probably just vaguely touch around and say that there were no problems.
At that time, Meiya would reveal that the thing in his hands was an imitation.
Imagining the bewildered expression he’ll have on his face then made her float an evil smile.

“Now then, it’s fine to not restrain yourself and pick them up.”
“Then please excuse me.”

The boy separated from Chrisse who was behind him, squat down beside the table, and picked up and analyzed the S&W and AK-47.

"…… These are fakes. The cylinder is firmly fixed in place, and the barrel's rifling isn't there. The AK is also off. It's too light, and the trigger can't be moved. The magazine, too, is stuck and can't be taken off…… Uh, could it be that you don't actually have the real S&W and AK-47?"

"…… huh?"

Meiya was speechless.

She felt it… her very soul was trembling.

"C, c, c, c, c, could it be… t, th, th, the real Lute-kamisama?"

Lute agreed while being startled by her barely chewed out stuttered words.

"Yes, that's so, but…. is there a problem?"
"I've been wanting to meet you! Kami-sama!"

Meiya blew off the sofa with vigor and went on her knees at Lute's feet. Taking his hand, she kissed it over and over and over again, and finally, she even kissed his feet.

"Wha!? Pl, please stop it! It tickles!"

Apart from Lute who was showing his resistance, everyone else was frozen stiff, unable to react at this sudden turn of events.

Being deeply moved and excited, Meiya turned around to face the slave dealer with a flushed smile filled with delight.

"How much is Kamisama!? I'll buy him at the asking price!"
"Uh, well… as we explained earlier, Lute is her… Chrisse-ojousan's slave."
"Oh, right, there was something like that!"

Meiya edged up to Chrisse and started negotiations.

"I beg you, Chrisse-san! Sell Kamisama to me! I'll pay ten times the price you paid for him! No, I'll pay 100 times the amount!"

However, even though ojou-sama was shaking fearfully, she strongly shook her head.
She wrote on her mini-blackboard and thrust it toward Meiya.

[It's impossible for me to sell off Lute-oniichan… to sell off family. I don't want to lose anyone anymore….]
"Ojou-sama… …"

Chrisse's words struck Lute at his heart and deeply moved him.
He cleared his throat to change the mood, and started negotiations with Meiya.

"To be honest, we have a favor to ask of Meiya Dragoon-sama. For that reason, I would like to explain our circumstances. It may be a bit long, but… will that be fine?"
"In that case, by all means, stay at my house today! Moreover, it's almost time for dinner, so allow me to arrange a meal! Ah, before that, you must be tired from your journey. Your garments also seem to be worn out. If it pleases you, would you like to take a bath to heal from the fatigue? I will also prepare a change of clothes!"

Her breathing rough, Meiya excitedly urged Lute with peremptory force.
It took all he had to simply say, "O.. ok. Thank you for the hospitality."

Meiya handed over the promised reward to the merchant from the Rano Slave House and gleefully took Lute and Chrisse to her residence.

Chapter 040 – Vlad House, Signal of Counterattack!

Lute, 12 years old.

The young lady and I are safe; we were able to obtain accommodation in Meiya Dragoon's estate.
Though it was a slightly different reaction from what I had expected, but if we are welcome then there shouldn't be any problems.

We were guided to the bath to recover from travel fatigue as a gesture of her goodwill.

I took off my clothes in the dressing room and entered the bath.

"Oh~……"

A bath large enough that you'd be able to swim in it was filled with hot water.
Soap, a towel, and even a brand new pail was provided.

As expected of a well-known genius magic tool inventor of the Dragon Continent.
Money doesn't seem to be an issue.

I wash my body with soap, and clean off any filth.
For the first time since I was reincarnated in this world, I am able to soak in hot water up to my shoulders.

"Aa~ This is the life. As I thought, baths are really nice…"

I didn't swim, but I enjoyed stretching out my hands and feet as I soak in the spacious bath.

When I got out of the bath, a change of clothes had been prepared.
Neatly folded traditional clothes worn by men of the Dragon Race was there.

The design looks like certain kung fu attires from China in my previous life.
It features short sleeves, and 7/8th length cropped trousers.

When I went out to the hallway, maid-san was waiting and she showed me to the dining room.

In front of the aforementioned dining room, I ran into ojou-sama who had just gotten out of the bath.
She was also wearing the dragon race's female traditional clothing; it was a dragon-dress look.

The women's dragon-dress had the exact same design as Chinese clothes.

My eyes gravitated towards the thin thigh peeking from the slit on the bright red dragon-dress.

"Oops! My feet slipped– (monotone)"

I trip unnaturally, looking at ojou-sama's figure in the dragon-dress up close.

Thin ankles, as well as thighs dyed slightly red from taking a bath.
Her smooth skin was still wet, and I understood that it would definitely be pleasant to touch.
And precisely because they were childlike, they exuded an immoral charm.

If I had encountered the current ojou-sama in my city from my previous life, I have confidence I would've stalked her.

Ojou-sama's post-bath skin became even redder and she quickly hid her mini blackboard behind her legs.
That gesture is also cute.

I awkwardly cleared my throat, and stood up while moving as if brushing the dust off my clothes.

A close call. Just a bit more, and my fascination with ojou-sama would've been exposed.
Then maid-san opened the door for us, and we entered the dining room.

"I've been waiting for you, Lute-kamisama, Chrisse-san."

The head of the mansion, Meiya Dragoon, greeted us with a beaming smile.

She is 18 years old.
She wore the same red dragon-dress as ojou-sama.
Big breasts, shapely waist, and a slender legs that are long like a model.
She's also a beauty to the extent that 100 out of 100 men all would have praised her face.

Apart from the two dragon horns on her head, her appearance was almost invariably similar to the human race.
She kindly offered us some dinner.

"Although we have some things to talk about, why don't we first enjoy a meal? Our chef, for you both, spared no expense in preparing it."

At Meiya's signal, it was brought in.
The dishes were cramped on to a round two tiered table.

It was a Chinese-styled table.
Steamed meat buns.
Pale brown tea similar to oolong tea.
And others such as small dragon buns, spring rolls, shumai, gyoza, sui gyoza, etc… — A world of traditional Chinese *yum cha* snacks extended before us.
We had to ration our meals in order to travel to the Dragon Continent from the Demon Continent; we who were trying to be economical with our money… our stomachs rumbled.

"Come now, both of you, no need to be reserved."

Urged by Meiya, ojou-sama and I expressed our gratitude and started eating.

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The three of us finished up the dishes that filled the Chinese-styled table. While we were drinking the oolong-like pale brown tea, apparently called “chacha”, I once again informed Meiya if our circumstances.

In order to start my own Legion, I left the orphanage and became an adventurer.
Then I was deceived by rookie-hunters, stripped of all my possessions, and sold as a slave.
Fortunately, I was bought by Chrisse-ojousama’s father, Count Dan Gate Vlad, and narrowly escaped a cruel fate.
Those benefactors, her parents, are currently being held captive.
He frankly told Meiya everything; that they came to meet her in order to seek her aid with regard to obtaining necessary resources and intel to free Chrisse’s parents and retake her house.

Supposing Meiya lent her strength, then after the recovery of the Vlad house and Chrisse’s parents, the Vlad house promises to cover any expenses and provide a suitable reward on top of that.
Ojou-sama also nodded in agreement to this arrangement.

But Meiya simply shook her head at that proposal.

“I’m not interested in monetary rewards. Instead, I would like to make a request to Lute-kamisama.”
“A request?”

Meiya rose from her chair, and proceeded to kneel on the floor with her hands held together in front of her chest. Then she, very deeply, bowed her head.

The gasps of the maids who were waiting on us sent shivers down my skin.

“This posture is, to the Dragon race, an act which shows utmost respect.”

Meiya explained so.
Is this the so-called *dogeza* of my previous life's Japan?
"Please, please… take this Meiya Dragoon as Lute-kamisama's disciple!"

"Dis… disciple!? To take the genius magic tool inventor, Meiya Dragoon-sama, as such a thing like a disciple would be outrageous!"
"Far from it! Lute-kamisama is the true genius! The owner of talent that far surpasses the level of a mere genius!"

"By the way, I've been wondering since some time ago, but why are you addressing me with -kamisama?"
"How else could I address the divine being who could create such a magnificent magic tool!? I could not even hazard a guess!"
"I, I appreciate the sentiment, but still… -kamisama is a bit…"

"If so, then how about 'Lute-sama'?"
"Please simply address me as Lute; no need for honorifics."
"What about 'Lute-kyunsama'?"
"Seriously! No honorifics is fine! Rather, what's with the "Lute-kyunsama" nonsense!?
"Impossible! To address Lute-kyunsama without honorifics! I would not do it even if you rip up my lips."
"… … if so, then "-sama" is fine. Please never use "kyun" or the like ever again."
I sighed in resignation.
Meiya once again pressed me.

"In that case, I accept and shall address you as Lute-sama. I, until Lute-sama takes me in as a disciple, will not for even a moment move from this spot."

Meiya continued to exclaim.

"If it is Lute-sama's desire, I would offer my everything! Status, fortune, and even my body and soul! All of it! So please make me your disciple, Lute-sama!"

Cut it out; ojou-sama's sorrowful gaze is painful.

"I understand. I'll make you my disciple. You don't have to offer me things like your body or your soul; so instead, please lend us your strength to

rescue master and the rest."
"My utmost gratitude for this blessing."

Meiya had on a smile that could outshine even the sun.
After a long journey, having eaten my fill and securing aid, the feeling of tension was gone and it made me sleepy.

Ojou-sama seems to also have reached her limit.

I proposed that we get a good rest for now and leave discussing the details for tomorrow.
Ojou-sama and Meiya were also of the same mind, and so we were dismissed for the day.

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The next morning…
Ojou-sama, Meiya and I were gathered in an open space beside an atelier within the Meiya estate's grounds.

I requested Meiya to create mud walls and foundations with magic.
Atop the foundations, bricks were arranged in a typical fashion.

While waiting, I checked the guns' conditions.

The S&W and AK47 I made, swindled away from me a bit more than 2 years ago by some fake adventurers, are back in my hands.

As for the revolver, its firing pin and hammer's mainspring are worn out. If they're this worn out, then even if the primer is struck, it probably can't cause an ignition.
It seems the cylinder's insides hasn't been properly cleaned, either. Like this, when the ejector rod pushes out shell casings, it wouldn't be smooth.

To put it bluntly, after firing, it may longer be possible to eject shell casings without hitting the ejector rod with a hammer or something.

Only for the characteristically tough AK47 does there seem to be no problems. It may also be because I made it I made it after I was already experienced with handling Magic Liquid Metal.
Banana magazine loaded; safety catch toggled.
Set to semi-automatic.
I pulled the cocking handle, and the first bullet moved to the chamber.

Taking a shooting stance, I shot the brick blocks one by one, smashing them.

It worked perfectly, without flaw.
As expected of the AK; truly an assault rifle that can be fired without a hitch even if it were to be buried in a wet rice field for 6 months covered in rust and dirt.
Though I intend to disassemble it later, just to be safe.

“How is it, Lute-sama? Are there any problems?”
“The revolver still needs a little bit of tuning, but it seems that there are no major faults on either one.”

Surprisingly, ojou-sama was not afraid and showed interest in the handgun.
On the contrary….

[Lute-oniichan, could you also teach me how to use that magic tool?]

She is proactively trying to learn.

[Using that magic tool; father, mother, everyone… I want the strength that can help them.]

Ojou-sama snorted roughly, demonstrating her will to fight.
The image of the girl who was afraid to simply go out of her own room until not too long ago was completely gone.

“Of course. I had fully intended for ojou-sama to join the battle. In fact, I believe that ojou-sama is our greatest war potential, our trump card.”
[Someone like me is?]

Ojou-sama was perplexed by my unexpected response.
I answered with an earnest smile that I was not lying.

“For ojou-sama, the S&W M10 revolver and AK-47 are no good. I will prepare something more appropriate.”

Something that would suit ojou-sama–

“A gun that properly utilizes ojou-sama’s unique traits; that would be — the sniper rifle.”

[The sniper rifle?]
“Yes. … … The hour of our, the Vlad House’s, counterattack approaches.”

This moment marked the birth of the vampire who would one day be feared as “Magician Slayer”, “Princess of the Night”, and “Nightmare”.

Chapter 041 – Sniper Rifle

Lute, age 13

I had been under the care of the household of the Dragon Continent's magic device developer, Meiya Dragoon, for several months.
In return for the food and lodging—I had taken her as my disciple as she requested.
As my disciple, I had been teaching her about the process of making guns; but, of course, there were conditions.
The three conditions are thus—Not to spread the techniques as she pleases, not to misuse it, and to follow my instructions if any problem occurs.

To my conditions, Meiya exclaimed with an honest look in her eyes: [If I were to somehow break these conditions, I will bite my tongue in front of Lute-sama and die].

This girl's no good, she's scary
I didn't think she would seriously, honestly swear an oath of suicide.

But on the other hand, this means that Meiya would not betray me.

However, no matter how she's praised as a genius magic device developer, the work seems to be hard for her.

First, she couldn't make the small parts out of magic liquid metal.
If she poured magic into it it should have become hard, but the metal sheets she took out was hard on the right side and brittle on the left—she could only make out-of-balance things like that.
The forms were uneven, and the thickness and strength were also defective.

Maybe she lacked the power of imagination, or maybe some other reason….

I tried having her make cartridges, but it seems that she could not imagine smokeless gunpowder to begin with.

It's not like I told her to simply make cartridges just by stuffing it with explosion magic.

But to tell Meiya, who hadn't seen nor heard of smokeless gunpowder, to imagine it, transform magic power, and put it into the cartridge, is a mistake from the start.

For now I would start by having her do some classroom learning about the basic knowledge regarding guns—the difference between the ammo for the revolver and the assault rifle, the purpose of rifling, the strength of metal required for use in handguns, etc.

At the same time as Meiya's classes, I was also coaching Chrisse-ojousama on how to control her magic power.

Ojousama's magic power is about the same as mine
So if she could remember how to control her magic power she can do what I could.

Excepting the time used for research, it took me about 30 days until I could remember the technique to control my magic power.
It should take about the same amount of time to drill this technique into ojousama.

At midday
The Dragon race has their meals in the mornings, noons, and evenings.
When in Rome, do as the Romans do—ojousama and I properly had three meals a day.

In the afternoons we would do practice battles to build up ojousama's strength.

Ojousama would get changed into rough clothes, tie up her long hair, and do warm-up exercises.
Firstly, she would make a run around the outer bounds of the Meiya estate.
Running to build up her body strength.

Ojousama had no body strength owing to being a shut-in.
Which is why she was doing practice to increase her base strength.

After she's done running, there would be unarmed combat and sword practice.
For unarmed combat she would do some serious sparring with me.
For swordplay, I had her practice swings with a wooden sword and exchange blows with me.

This training regiment is the same as the one Gigi-san taught me.

(I wonder why Gigi-san betrayed the Vlad house he loved so much…)

No matter how much I think about it I won't get an answer unless it's from the person himself.
That was another reason why we need to gain strength and return to the Demon Continent.
At night, once ojousama's fatigue is at its peak, she had dinner, a bath, and went straight to sleep.
Meiya and I holed up inside the workshop and worked on making the sniper rifle.

The rifle we were making—was a Remington M700P.
To be precise, we intended to make something with the M700P as a base.

Firstly, what is a "sniper rifle"?

Until the First World War, infantry troops would stand in ranks separated by a distance of several hundred meters to 1000 meters and attack using bolt-action rifles (bolt action is a method of firing guns by shooting one bullet at a time and reloading by manually operating the bolt (cylindrical part situated behind the chamber) using its handle). However with the

appearance of machine guns, these ranks of troops were easily mowed down.

If an infantry troop were to attack a machine gun emplacement the way they have always done they would inevitably turn into a mountain of corpses. So things like attacking at night or digging trenches to allow close-quarters combat became commonplace. However, with the bolt action rifle, during the time taken to reload the bolt after shooting they would be vulnerable to attack from enemies.
So rather than guns that need to be carefully aimed from a distance, infantry would seek guns that could fire rapidly from a short range.

Then submachine guns (small machine guns that could be used like a pistol) and assault rifles were developed, and the tactic of barraging the enemy with bullets became mainstream.

However, weapons that could be precisely aimed and fired from a long distance was indispensable for eliminating enemy commanders, radio operators, and machine gunners situated a long distance away. So the simple and high accuracy bolt action rifle received attention once again.

The bolt action rifle that was sought for a new role received various improvements and strengthening necessary for sniping.
Thus, the [sniper rifle] was born.
But although they're all called [sniper rifles], there are various kinds according to target and usage like ones for military use, hunting, and for shooting games.
For example, for hunting use—the bolt action rifle is lightened and called a [mountain rifle].

The [mountain rifle] is a [relatively lightweight guns having a long range capable of taking down big game].
For a lightweight gun to fire a heavy bullet, the recoil is severe.
But rather than the recoil, the fact of having to lug a heavy gun while trekking on a mountain is considered, so the gun was made lighter.

As for the case of shooting games—game rifles do not come with a magazine, and it had a unique shape because it was specialized for use in games, no consideration was put into making it easy to carry.
Which is why although the game rifle can shoot with accuracy, it does not

have any practical use.
There is no instance in which a game rifle is used for sniping as-is.

Then, for military use—military and police [sniper rifles] were designed with a shape that was easy to be carried, and had a reasonable weight though not as light as mountain rifles, it is a gun with good balance.
Normally, when you say [sniper rifle] you would mean the military/police use ones.
The gun I was making this time was also a military/police use sniper rifle.

Anyway, there were also cases where an automatic rifle, that had a lower accuracy than a bolt-action rifle, were chosen for a military troop.
The reason is that while a bolt-action rifle can only shoot single rounds at a time, an automatic rifle can fire 2, 3 shots between reloads, giving it a higher adaptability (for example when having to deal with several terrorists simultaneously).
However, the automatic rifle reloads automatically after firing. At that moment, the vibration from the parts moving inside interferes with the firing and this makes its accuracy lower than that of the bolt-action rifle.

Because I made the AK-47, I had the option of making the semi-automatic sniper rifle SVD Dragunov that was officially adopted in the former Soviet Union.
The Dragunov's internals were made based on the AK-47. With the scope included, it weighs 4.3 kilograms, which is light for an automatic.
There was an automatic rifle called H&K PSG-1 that weighed 8.1 kilograms.

But this time, since we aim to rescue master and madam, there was a possibility that either one or both of them would be used as hostages.
In that situation, if we could save just madam, master could be free to act to free himself.
So I needed a high accuracy sniper rifle that had an allowable error of less than 2 cm in 100 m and 6 cm in 300 m, and so I used the M700P as a base.

The M700P is a high performance sniper rifle intended for use by police and army special forces made based on the hunting rifle M700 by the American small arms maker Remington LLC. The M700P had a long barrel and high accuracy. It was a bolt-action rifle for use by police special forces and in hostage rescue scenarios requiring certainty within the first shot.

Its specs were as follows.

Caliber: 7.62 mm x 51 NATO rounds
Overall Length: 1662 mm
Barrel Length: 660 mm
Rounds per Load: 5 rounds [Inner box Magazine]

It's a sniper rifle well suited for our purpose.
Firstly I started making the core with the rifling carved onto it.

The sniper rifle requires a higher accuracy than the AK-47.
I had to do all the production work carefully.
Concentration is important.

"…. I feel a bit tired. I think we should stop here for now."

Then after a few hours of work, I ended at a suitable point, and went to the room given to me for a late night sleep.
I laid down on the bed, and as I closed my eyes I quickly fell asleep.

This is how I spent my day nowadays.
▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼
In the afternoon, time for the unarmed combat practice.
At the courtyard, ojousama and I were having a mock battle.

Ojousama, in rough garb with her hair tied, was lunging at me with all her strength.
She was of course using body strengthening to support her body.

I easily avoided her right straight by circling around sideways.
I stopped her with a left jab, and kicked her with a right side kick.

[tsu!?]

Ojousama guarded for the kick at a dangerous moment.
But she lost to the force and rolled down onto the ground.

“Ojousama, your attacks are too sloppy. You should’ve moved to anticipate the opponent’s next move. If it’s just hitting each other even a child could do it. Hurry up and stand.”

Ojousama supported herself with her hands on the ground, breathing roughly, and made no sign of moving.
Not minding that, I started to hurl insults at her.

“Seriously HOW long are you FUCKING going to lay down there? Get a hold of yourself MAGGOT!”

Ojousama, still breathing roughly, raised her face with a difficult expression.

“You are this world’s lowest lifeform. You’re not a demon race. You’re not even worth trash scrounged from amphibians! What is it? If you don’t like it then show me your guts!”

Ojousama picked herself up while gritting her teeth and braced herself.

“So you can stand! You’ve got guts. I’ll work you to the bone as your reward. I’ll work you till you drop dead! I’ll work you till you have to drink milk from your ass!”
“Hey——!”

I turned my head toward the angry voice, and there was one of ojousama’s childhood friend, the Demon race, Centaur clan Karen Bishop there.
Standing behind her is a maid carrying a large travelling bag that looks to be hers.

Karen squared up her shoulders and stepped up to me, her ponytail swinging.

“Lute! You’re a servant! What the hell are you saying to Chrisse! I don’t really get what it means but I know it’s something bad!”
“!? Welcome, Karen-sama! It looks like the letter safely—”

As I was about to give Karen a warm welcome, the owner of the place Meiya popped a vein and angrily interrupted me.

“How rude! A demon race saying something like that to the genius of all geniuses Lute-sama! Guards! What are you doing! Hurry up and kick this insolent one out! How did someone like this get inside my estate!”
“Calm down Meiya. She’s ojousama’s friend, the Centaur Karen Bishop-sama. I already told you that I sent a letter to explain our current situation and asked her to come, right?”

“…. She’s Chrisse-san’s friend, huh. Truthfully, I think she’s a lovely person. How do you do Karen-san. My name is Meiya Dragoon, Lute-sama’s number one disciple. Feel free to relax and think of this place like your own home.”
「こ、こちらこそよろしく」
“M, me too.”

Once I scolded Meiya, she became friendly as if she was a different person. Karen was also surprised at her change in attitude and became nervous.

Karen cleared her throat and turned to me once again.

“Anyway, While you are fugitives, but what the hell are you saying to your master Chrisse.”
“Well, that was just part of training.”
“Training?”
“I already have ojousama’s consent. It’s a spartan military training. I would never say something like that to her otherwise, right, ojousama?”
[Yeah, it’s just as Lute-oniichan said.]

Ojousama wrote on the mini blackboard and showed it to Karen.

[Karen-chan, thanks for specifically coming for me. I’m very happy to see you again after so long.]
“You’re taking the words out of my mouth. I was surprised when a letter arrived at my home after I heard you went missing. It had a name I don’t recognize, but it was written in Chrisse-chan’s handwriting that I know very well.”

Karen stepped up to Ojousama and hugged her.

“Really, I’m glad you’re alright…. Not only me, but Barnie and Muir were also worried when we heard Chrisse went missing.”

The two were hugging each other, being glad for each other's safety, almost like sisters.

Some time ago I asked for Meiya's help to write a letter addressed to Karen. I had actually wanted to send letters to the other two, but for all three of ojousama's friends to receive a letter and have them move at the same time would stand out too much, so it can't be helped.

After discussing it, I decided to send a letter to Karen, who was most acquainted with military matters.
Her family runs a large weapons and armor business.
Not just selling them, they practically do all kinds of work on them.

Karen's family has their own mercenary army, and they are dispatched to various places with weapons and armors. It seems that they using their products on the battlefield to spread word of their brand, which promotes business. Furthermore after the battles, they would be able to make improvements from feedback on suggestions and ease of use regarding the weapons etc.

Having that kind of family situation, and consequently receiving strict military training, I decided to entrust her with calming the others down.
The fact that I called her to the Meiya estate in the Dragon Continent is also for no other reason.
It is to let her know about our situation, for new intelligence, and to inform her of our safety.

I asked ojousama, [wasn't it forbidden to ask the help of another family in a family dispute?], but she said that it was okay, because it's not like we were asking her for direct help. Therefore I was able to send the letter to Karen without hesitation.

Karen tore herself off of ojousama, and rubbed the tears in her eyes.

"It's also good that Lute is safe. Really, thanks for protecting Chrisse."
"Not at all, it's the obvious thing to do as a butler of the Vlad house. Then, I'm sorry to ask this immediately after you just got here, but can you tell us about the current situation?"
"Well, since the weather is nice and all, why don't we have some tea at the courtyard."

As Meiya raised her hand, the maids have already arranged a table, chairs, a parasol, tea, and tea cakes at the courtyard, as if they had been prepared beforehand.
In under three minutes, a small but fashionable spot had been erected at the courtyard.

Temporarily stopping the unarmed combat practice, we listened to Karen's story while sipping on the tea.

According to the news Karen brought us—
It seems that after master was captured, they put on a magic prevention collar to seal his magic and sold him as a slave.
She knew that he was sold not to the Demon Continent, but some other continent, though she didn't know where.

Madam was locked up at the top of a tower in the Vlad castle.
She also had a magic prevention collar put on her, and was not able to escape on her own.

The castle seems to be occupied by the Vampire house's head, the eldest son Pylkkänen Vlad and the second son Ravio Vlad.

They were being loud about plundering master's business and even unreasonably resorting to violence to unfairly lower wages, so they faced considerable resistance from the workers. Thanks to that, the business seem to have become stagnated.

Merry-san and the other surviving servants escaped and hid in several places, but since they had little fighting power they were unable to do anything.
Now that they don't have master, the difference in power was overwhelmingly against them.
Moreover, there were several of the Vampire house's magicians besides Pylkkänen and Ravio standing watch at the castle. Because of that, they couldn't do a thing.

The only blessing within the misfortune is that they guaranteed madam's safety
As she was their only prisoner, if they somehow got her wounded or killed, Merry-san and the other houses with relations to the Vlad house won't stay

silent. They couldn't protest about matter of master and his brothers, but madam is another matter entirely. If something happens to her her relatives won't stay still.
If madam died it certainly would go beyond the limits of what can be settled as being a family dispute.
It will be a war to pay back blood with blood.

Of course, it was something they did not want. Therefore they guaranteed madam's safety.

Furthermore, it was also the same reason why they searched every nook and cranny for ojousama.

If they had ojousama, were madam to pass away for some reason they could use ojousama as a new hostage to protect against Merry-san's attacks.

Karen grit her teeth sorrowfully.

"I want to do something to help if I could, but another family can't interfere in a family dispute. I'm sorry I can't do anything besides providing information."
"Not at all, this is helpful enough. But is it really alright? If it's forbidden to interfere in a family dispute, doing all this, though it's only providing information, would also count."

Ojousama had already said [it's okay], but just in case, I tried asking Karen.
In response, she put on a wicked smile.

"I'm only making sure that my dear friend is safe and have a chat with her. If she somehow got intelligence from that, that's not my problem, right?"

In other words, it seems like this doesn't count as [lending a hand].
I don't know what standards they were using, but if it's no problem then so be it.

"Karen-sama, thank you very much. Thanks to you I was able to get accurate information on the situation. This way, one of the strategies I thought up seems to be usable."
"Hoo, what kind of strategy is that?"

I had the daughter of a military family who had mercenaries in their employ, Karen, listen to my plan, and asked for her opinion.

The contents of the plan is simple.
Get inside the castle with a small number of people using the escape route we used when we fled the castle.
Meet up with madam, and then leave the castle.

Meanwhile, in order to draw the eyes of the castle guards, I want to have Merry-san and the other servants do something flashy as a diversion.
Though they have little fighting power, they should be able to do something once.
If they did that the Vampire house head would be on the lookout and dispatch the magicians after them. As a result, the castle's defenders would be shorthanded.

Karen folded her arms and considered the strategy.

"….. I see. It's a simple plan, but it's more realistic than gathering a force and assault the castle, but isn't it hard to rescue Seras-san just with Chrisse and Lute?"

Having her point that out, I frowned.
Certainly, our fighting power is not enough to infiltrate the castle.

"I wasn't intending to include ojousama in the infiltration team. I was going to have her assist during our escape."
"Then can you do it alone, Lute? Not being a magician and all."
"U, ummm…"

Meiya, who had been silent, raised her hand.
With a red face and bleary eyes, she announced.

"Then I, Lute-sama's number one student, shall serve as your partner! I'm confident that I can attentively help you out like a lover, like a wife, like a faithful servant—nay! Even more than that!"
"No, Meiya is no good. Even though you're a B-minus ranked mage, you don't have good reflexes, do you? I certainly can't take you along."
"Uguu!?"

She collapsed as if she had taken an arrow right to the heart.
However she is totally non-athletic, I tried having her practice with ojousama once, but she became nothing but a burden.
At that time I cut her off from practice since we had no time and she was being a hindrance.

[So how about we hire some adventurers from the Guild?]
"That is absolutely a no."

I swiftly rejected ojousama's proposal.
There's no way I could include some adventurer… some untrustworthy person in this important plan. In the end, they were no more than outsiders employed using money. If any problem happens…

The bitter trauma from when I was tricked by fake adventurers went through my mind.

As I wanted Merry-san and the others to act as diversion, I can't include them.
In the first place, they had already been seen by the Vampire house, and were under observation.
I can't have them help with an undercover surprise operation.

I at least wanted one other capable person for the castle infiltration.
At least a B-minus ranked magician, and someone I know that I can trust. If possible, someone who had learned magic, and was good at handling a handgun, that much goes without saying.
No way someone like that exi—no, there is one person like that.

My fiancée who grew up together with me at Elle-sensei's orphanage, Snow!

"If my fiancée Snow, who's studying at a magic school were here, this discussion would be over sooner. If I were to go meet her right now it would take over a year to go there and back…. I guess it's impossible after all. Hm? what's wrong Meiya? You look pale."

Meiya started to sweat like waterfall with a pale face.

"No, actually… how should I put it, well…"

Meiya mumbled, stumbling on her words.
Rather than Meiya's response, Karen reacted to my remark.

"Lute has a fiancée? I didn't know that."
"My childhood friend who grew up in the same orphanage with me. I never had the chance to talk about her, sorry. But I wonder if she could conveniently appear. Please reach her, o my voice! Somehow—"

"LUTE-KUN!!"

The moment I raised my hands and jokingly offered a prayer to the heavens.

Seemingly having waited for the moment, a young girl appeared from behind a tree planted in the courtyard.
Her silver hair tied in a ponytail. A bishoujo with dog ears, a tail, skin white as a field of snow, and breasts that you could tell was big even from under her clothes, approached with tears in her eyes.

"I miss you…. I miss you, Lute-kun!"
My fiancée Snow who should have been studying magic at a school in the Fairy Human Continent was for some reason standing before my eyes.

Chapter 042 – Participation

Snow who is supposed to be studying at the magic school on the Fairy Human Continent, appeared in Meiya's residence!
The chair flew from the momentum of me standing up.

"S-Snow!? Why are you here! You aren't a fake, are you!"
[[Lute-kun! Lute-kun! Lute-kun!]]

Snow came running while calling my name in Fairy Human Continent's language.

She jumped and wrapped her arms around my neck.
Her face buried was making "fuga fuga" sounds as she sniffed my smell.
The long-missed action caused a feeling of nostalgia to gush out within my chest, so much that I unintentionally hugged her until it hurts.

[[Lute-kun, you're suffocating me.]]
[[So, sorry. I was so happy I hugged you too hard.]]

It took me awhile to be able to speak out in the Fairy Human language initially, as I haven't used it in a while.
It's the adverse effect for not using it in such a long time.

"Lute, what is she saying? And who the hell is she? She couldn't be someone from the main family right……"

Karen moves in front of ojou-sama to cover for her.
I panicked and attempted to prove Snow's innocence.

"You are mistaken! She is Snow, my childhood friend and fiancée, that was mentioned earlier!"

I switched language and asked.

[[Does Snow understand Demon Continent language?]]
[[Not a problem, as it is a mandatory class during the magic school freshman year.]]

Come to think of it, even though Snow is very weak in math from small, she is quite good in literacy.
I'm getting nostalgic of El-sensei's lecture.

Snow parted her hands from me and gave a courteous greeting in Demon Continent Language.

"Pleased to meet you, I am Snow, Lute's fiancée."

Though the intonation was strange here and there, there mostly were no problems.
She continued her introduction.

"I attend at the Fairy Human Continents magic school. I am a A-minus Rank magician."
"Whaaaa-!?"

I involuntarily let out my voice as I was startled.
Surely I must have misheard it, is what I thought.

"S-Snow! Surely you're joking, that you're a A-minus rank magician."
"It's the truth. I wanted to graduate as soon as possible to meet Lute and endured it. And so I became a A-minus rank magician. Of course it wasn't by my strength alone, I was heavily taught by Shishou."
"Shishou?"
"Un! Um, Shishou is a magician called [Freezing Witch]. I got along well with her and was taught many things."
"F-freezing witch!?"

This time it was Karen who raised her voice in surprise

"Being a High-elf and called the [Freezing Witch], even among the High-elves there is only the one famous, having lived 1000 years and reached S-Rank magician!?"

A-rank is a position that only a few of the so-called [geniuses] reach.
S-rank is for those entities called [supermen], [freaks], and [monsters].

“Un, that person is my Shishou. She told me she was naming me the [Witch of Ice and Snow], but it’s kind of embarrassing so it’s hard to say.”
“No, you say embarrassing, that’s not the thing one focuses on……”

I reflexively let out a tsukkomi.
Snow tilted her head, it is not known if she understood it.

Idiots and geniuses are only separated by a fine line —— I wonder what sort of campus life did Snow have at the magic school after she was sent there?

“……so why is Snow here? What about school?”
“That’s because obtaining A-minus rank at the magic school will garner enough credits to graduate without having to attend. Just as I was considering on going to meet up with Lute, that person said something terrible!”
“Hiee～!”

Snow pointed to Meiya who was crouching within the table’s shadow in an attempt to hide herself.
Meiya was frightened in the face of Snow as if she was a small animal in front of its predator.
I never would have thought that the 2 of them were acquainted.
Just what happened between the 2?

“Calm down Snow. For the time being, explain to me from the start.”
“Un, understood. About that……”

Snow explained in sequence the reason for her being here.

Her first time meeting Meiya at the Fairy Human Continent magic school parlor.

She approached Snow with the desire to negotiate a price for the [S&W M10 2-inch] revolver that is in Snow's possession.

Her friendly attitude suddenly changed as she raise her voice crying out, after Snow rejected her offer.

"Lute-sama was already killed by a monster! That is why, that Magic Tool should not be in the possession of someone like you who does not know its worth. In order to leave his achievement to/for future generations, someone such as myself should be the one to have it!"

Meiya, other than being a genius Magic Tool inventor, she could also speak in Fairy Human Continentlanguage.

But that brought forth disaster, having said what was on her mind.
As a result, Snow having been infuriated by the utterance, pointed the muzzle at the blasphemous Meiya.

After leaving the parlor, Snow once again made arrangements to go on a journey.
She believed that Meiya's utterance was surely a lie, however anxiety was tightening her chest so she decided to first to head to El-sensei.
Because she believed that El-sensei surely knew where I currently was.

During Snow's journey from the orphanage in Aljio territory to the magic school, it took around 3 months for a one-way trip on a carriage.
This time, her journey from the magic school to the orphanage was travelled in a straight line without dropping by any towns nor regard to dangerous roads where monsters and bandits appear, she reached her destination in about 1 month.

Again with your reckless actions……

Upon returning to the orphanage, El-sensei was surprised.

For the sake of inquiring my location from sensei, and she reluctantly held out a letter.
It was the letter that I wrote to El-sensei.

Fumbling at starting my adventurer life, being sold as a slave by a slave merchant and currently there is no problem as I am under the protection of the Vlad's house as ojou-sama's butler. Please do not worry, but as I do not wish to distract Snow from her studies do not tell her, so it was written.

As soon as she received the letter, Snow, without wasting a moment, headed for the Vlad House in the Demon Continent. And as she was going past a checkpoint in the Dragon Continent, it seems shesmelled a nostalgic scent.

Following that scent, she arrived at the Meiya residence and thoughtlessly jumped over the walls surrounding it, and when she entered the courtyard where I was at, she spontaneously cheerfully ran over …… or so it would seem.
Oy, isn't this timing is way too good no matter how you look at it.

After sniffing my personal odor Snow said "It's the best" while swaying happily.
No, nobody said to explain that much.

After separating when we were 10, I haven't met with Snow for over 3 years.
Her body seems to have grown but… the more I get involved the "ahonoko"-ification seems to be progressing.

Having finished listening to Snow's story, Meiya, with face paler than a ghost, came to us with the traditional Dragon Race dogeza.

"M-m-m-my apologies! Snow-sama! I was not aware that milady was Lute-kuns fiance and let such rude things come from my mouth!"

To such a sudden development Lute stiffened.
Meiya continued on.

"At that time, I have truly underestimated Lute-sama. However! That was when I was still ignorant of the untouchable majesticity of Lute-sama. Now, I am able to believe that Lute-sama cannot be killed by lowly monsters. So please somehow, do not throw away this number one disciple! If I were to be thrown away by Lute-sama, I would lose the reason to stay in this world! If such a time were to come, please ask me to kill myself."

We-ell in truth I wasn't killed by monsters, but was tricked by fake adventurers.

Also, Meiya keeps claiming that she is my number one disciple……

"…..Using ones life as a shield like that, and expecting forgiveness from the other is a bit different I think"
"Nn!?"

To Meiyas desperate apology, Snow takes a tough attitude.
I pat Snow's head in order to calm her down.

"I did not know that you two had such a past, however it is not as though damage was caused? Plus now I am currently indebted in many ways to Meiya. So do not treat each other cruely. Meiya, I would not dismiss you as disciple. So please stop talking about such dangerous things as suicide."

"Muu, if Lute-kun says so…."
"Th-thank you very much! Lute-sama! I am unworthy! This Meiya Dragoon will swear fealty to Lute-sama!"

Snow reluctantly does so, Meiya raised her face while shedding tears like a waterfall.
And as though doing a complete 180 unlike with Meiya, Snow turned to Ojou-sama, my current ?owner?, with a friendly attitude.

"Nice to meet you, I am Snow. Are you Chrisse-chan?"
[Y-Yes! That's right!]

Ojou-sama hurriedly wrote the words in the Demon Continent's Language.
Snow took Ojou-samas hand and said her thanks while tears formed on the edges of her eyes.

"Thank you! Thank you for saving Lute-kun. Truly thank you!"
[From my side as well, I keep being saved by Lute-oniichan in many ways.]
"Oniichan?"
[As I am a year younger and it feels as though he is my older brother, I asked to call him Oniichan… Is it no good?]
"Uun, not at all, if anything I could even be jealous. If Lute-kun is Oniichan, then I'm Chrisse's Oneechan right. Please call me Oneechan."

[Hai! Snow-oneechan]
“That I managed to get such a cute little sister! I’m so happy.”

Snow hugged Ojou-sama without holding back. Her tail was also busily shaking back and forth with joy.
The shy Ojou-sama without being scared even though this was the first time meeting Snow, was smiling in her embrace.

As Snow lets go of Ojou-sama, she turns to Karen to introduce herself to her as well.
As they both wore ponytails, they seem to strangely get along.

And Snow utters a question.

“So, what are Lute-kun and the others talking about anyway?”
“If I were to talk about that it would be a really long story, though…..”

As I was scratching my head on where to start talking about it, Meiya voiced a proposition.

“Snow-san and Karen-san, must be tired as you just arrived from your journeys, so how about you both take a bath first to relax from it? After you finish with the bathing, it would just about be time for dinner, so how would it be to listen to it all as we eat?”

It is true that both of them had just arrived and must be tired.
Having them listen to more than they already have here in the courtyard, makes me feel bad.

“That’s right. Let’s do as Meiya suggested.”
“If Lute-kun says so, then we’ll do so. Karen-san, let’s go together to the bath”
“I-Is it alright? With my body being such…”
“It’s alright so let’s go together! Chrisse-chan too, since you’re all covered in mud, I’ll wash your back”
[Yes, Snow-oneechan!]

With this flow, Ojou-sama will also be going to take a bath it seems.
As Meiya will be giving orders to the maids, she will not be joining them to bathe.

And so it came that I will be telling the situation to Snow while we ate dinner.

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After the bathing, Snow appeared in a Dragon dress.
As expected, there was no Dragon dress that could be used by Karen of the Centaur and so she came in the normal clothes she had prepared herself.

While eating dinner, we told Snow about the situation that is currently happened.
On top of that, I asked Snow for her cooperation
Of course even though it was asked of her by her childhood friend and fiance, it was not unconditional —- so it was told.

But, Snow without hesitating agreed to cooperate.
Ojou-sama while shedding tears very deeply said her gratitude.

Night, as I was about to sleep, a knock on the door.
As I open the door, on the other side—-

“I’m sorry I’m late.”

There stood Snow in pajamas, holding a pillow.
Wearing the engagement bracelet on her left arm, which was given a long time ago.

“After the long wait, I thought that we would be together tonight…. Is it no good?”

There is no way that it would not be alright!

“This is between me and Snow, you don’t have to reserve yourself go ahead and enter”
“…. If that’s so, I’ll be intruding.”

As Snow enters, she arranges her pillow onto the bed.
Her pajamas were a shirt on top and some shorts like hotpants below.
Since of course there is no such thing as a bra, she walks and the splendidly grown Omune-sama greatly sways.
As she walks barefoot, the healthy and slender silvery tail rises and harmonizingly swings along.

She grew in height and also unimaginably so in the chest area.
Though my mental age is 40, my body is still that of a young 13 year old.
To my fiance in front of my eyes telling myself “don’t lust” is the impossible part.

(C-Calm down myself. Truly in the Meiya residence….in another persons home to receive for the first time even for me would be past unpleasant. There is also the problem of Ojou-sama and the master and everyone… I will restrain myself.)

As I count prime numbers, I slowly get into the same bed where Snow is.
Even though she prepared a pillow by herself, she places her head onto my arm.

The chest on my flank! Snow’s legs are coiling around! I feel as though the chains of reasons are slowly starting to scrape and fall apart.

However, even such desire is extinguished, as I noticed that Snow was crying.

“Snow, are you crying?”
“Being able to be like this with Lute-kun, I was just so happy…”
“….Forgive me Snow. Even the engagement bracelet got ruined.”

“Uun, to be able to be like this with Lute-kun is all I want. Truly it’s good that you were safe.”

Snow buries her tear filled face.
As though she was on the edge of delirium she continued to mumble “It’s good that Lute-kun was safe” while continuing to cry.

I continued to repeat apologies as many times as I could, for thewhole night — I gently pet Snow’s head until she finally cried herself to sleep.

Chapter 043 - Girls' Meeting at Night

The morning after I shared a bedroom with Snow.
The Centaur Karen Bishop left the Meiya Estate to go back to the Demon Continent.

We did recommend that she take it easy and stay for a little while, but she herself wanted to inform the other two friends of ojousama's about her safety and to Merry-san and the gang about the plan, so she flew off like an arrow.

That's a military girl for you.
Muscle for brains.

Snow stayed at the Meiya residence.
Moreover, she took over the responsibility of ojousama's martial arts and swords training from me.

Meiya and I was to concentrate on the work on the M700P sniper rifle (although Meiya only did so far as help out).

In return for food and lodging and the magic liquid metal, I was supposed to teach her about guns, but since there was no time I had her accept that I will be concentrating on the sniper rifle.
As thanks I promised that I would do so right after Master and Madam had been rescued.

Our daily schedule nowadays is as follows.
Morning—Meiya and I working on the sniper rifle. Ojousama practicing magic power control.
Evening—Meiya and I working on the sniper rifle. Ojousama trains in unarmed combat and swordplay with Snow. Also, recently revolver and assault rifle firing practice had been added to her practice subjects.

This is one of those recent days.

By keeping up with practice without complaints, ojousama's body had become stronger than average.
In unarmed and sword combat, she had reached a stage where she could defend herself.

On the other hand, her marksmanship was at a level where you can't say it's mere natural talent.
I can't wait to have her hold the sniper rifle.

Then, about the fabrication progress…. Once I could make the core for carving the riflings, making the gun body won't be that hard.

I dipped the core in the magic liquid metal and imagined the gun barrel around it, just like when using cold hammering.
To suppress jitter, I imagined a thick, heavy barrel.

The longer the barrel is, the front sight and rear sight became further apart, which makes it easier to sense [Aiming Errors], but long barrels make the muzzle end vibrate harder when the gun shakes. So I made the barrel thick.

For rifle barrels, a length of about 500 mm is enough, but for the M700 Police I'm making now the barrel was 660 mm long.
It is the barrel's length that gives it the precision for accurate firing.

The weight also had the advantage of making it more stable. However, if it was too heavy it becomes difficult to carry, so I needed to cut grooves on the thick barrel as a method to make it lighter

Then again, the Vampire clan had more physical strength than humans. Ojousama was no exception, by using body strengthening she defeated me in arm wrestling.

The other thing I need to pay attention to about the barrel was cutting an angle on the muzzle—the so called [Crown].

The end of the barrel, the muzzle, was a part that is easy to damage
If the muzzle is damaged, the moment a bullet is fired through it, gases would cause the bullet's trajectory to be offset, although only slightly

So the muzzle is not left just as a cross-section cut from the barrel, but instead an angle is cut into it. This way it becomes harder to damage. This part is called the [crown].

There is also the [bedding] where the gun receiver (the part connected to the barrel and the bolt) is glued to the gunstock.
Unless the receiver is glued to the gunstock, the contact point becomes a [point] instead of a stable [surface] and the aiming precision becomes bad.

On the other hand, the barrel and the stock shouldn't be glued too strongly together.
When the gun is fired, the barrel would vibrate strongly, though not by far. If it were to hit the stock at that time, the vibration would only become stronger, and also the vibration would be different each time so aiming accuracy would decrease

For that reason the barrel and the stock are separated by over 1 mm. Separating the barrel and the stock like this is called floating (or floating barrel). This way, every time the gun is fired, the barrel would move the same way (given that the bullet and the powder are identical), and won't interfere much with the aiming accuracy.

Another point where the sniper rifle is different than other guns is the trigger.
In normal rifles, the trigger weight (the power needed to pull the trigger, trigger pull) is around 3 kg, but for the sniper rifle it is lowered to less than half of that. This kind of lightened trigger is called [Feather Touch] triggers.

Still, even though the trigger weight was so light, unless the trigger is pulled in the same direction as the bullet's flight, it would affect the direction of said flight and the bullet will stray even if just a little bit (forward-backward movement have almost no effect on the bullet's ballistic trajectory).
So to make sure that doesn't happen, snipers do things like think of themselves not as people pulling a trigger, but become like stone and become one with the gun. Also, it is said that the former Japanese Army was taught to be [like frost descending on a dark night] when pulling the trigger.

For as long as they live, human bodies breathe and their hearts beat. It is impossible to be perfectly still.
Which is why various tricks become necessary.

There are still a lot of things that one needs to be careful of when making the sniper rifle body, but so long as care is taken during the manufacture, there will be no problems for the most part. The one that will be problematic is the bullet cartridge.

Even when making the revolver and the AK-47, the bullet cartridge had caused more problems than the gun body itself.

The cartridges we were making were 7.62 mm × 51.
The size is about 1.5 times a AAA battery.
This ammunition cartridge is to be used when aiming at targets 300 meters away.

I wonder how much time it'll take to make this….
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At night, there was a knock on my bedroom door.
It was of course, my childhood friend and fiancée, Snow.

Every night since our reunion she would come sleep on the same bed with me.
Thanks to that I was finding it hard to keep my self-control….

Somehow, though, she's being a bit strange tonight.
As she opened the door, the first thing out of Snow's mouth is an apology.

"I'm sorry, Lute-kun, I'm not going to be sleeping with you tonight."
"I don't actually mind, but is something wrong?"
"Today Chrisse-chan invited me to a tea party tonight, and I promised to have a chat about lots of things."

I see, so it was a pajama-party-like event.

“She said she’ll tell me all about Lute-kun as a butler, I’m looking forward to it. ….Also, there were some things on my mind so I thought I’d like to talk with her about it.”
“All right. It can’t be helped then. Don’t sleep so late, though. Tell that to ojousama, too.”
“Fufufufu, Lute-kun, you sound like Chrisse-chan’s mother”
“I’m not her mom, I’m her butler.”

“Ah that’s right isn’t it. Well, see you tomorrow then. Good night Lute-kun.”
“Yeah, ‘night.”

After exchanging pleasantries with Snow, I tucked in to bed early
Right this time, Snow is probably having a fun fun pajama party with ojousama.

For the first time since I reunited with Snow, I was sleeping alone. Feels a bit lonely.
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The next morning, I met up with Snow and ojousama in front of the dining room.
Of course, both of them looked a little sleepy.

They were both wearing dragon dresses.
They suited each of them all too well.

“Morning Snow, good morning ojousama.”
“Morning, Lute-kun.”
“*gasp*”

Snow greeted me as usual, but ojousama’s face turned red and she hid behind Snow’s back.
That reaction came as a shock to me.

Ojousama and I had known each other for over 2 years.
I didn’t think we were still so distant.

(Eh? Did I do something?)

Snow laughed in amusement. Seems like me making a confused face in the morning was funny.

“Lute-kun, you’re overreacting. She’s just embarrassed because we talked about lots of things about you last night.”
“Hold on there Snow. Just what about me were you talking about?”
[Y, you can’t, Snow-oneechan! That thing was a secret just between us!]
“It’s all right, I wasn’t going to tell Lute-kun.”

They ignored me and left for their room amicably, like a pair of sisters.
I was left behind all alone.

(What about me was it? Snow said [all sorts] of things, right… M, maybe she told her about how I shit my pants back at the orphanage!? Then it’s no wonder ojousama turned red in the face! Uooooo! Seriously!? Did my gentlemanly image suddenly crash and burn!?)

“Is anything the matter, Lute-sama?”

Meiya came and talked to me, who was writhing in agony alone in front of the room.
I ignored her call and continued writhing in agony.

Like this, several months passed since we arrived here.
—The time for the rescue is steadily approaching.

Chapter 044 – Breaking In

—Third person POV—

The Vlad Castle in the Demon Continent
Up until a few months back it was the home of the whole family of Dan Gate Vlad and their servants.
However, they fell into the patriarch of the Vampire house's trap, and the family scattered. The servants were also forced out of the castle.

Now the patriarch of the Vampire clan Pylkkänen Vlad and his younger brother Ravino live there.

Their wives, daughters, sons, and family stayed at their own house.
Pylkkänen and Ravino settled down in the Vlad castle while they were in the middle of checking through its assets. They investigated business capital, bonds, household goods, and other things that could turn into money.
Living in the Vlad castle was convenient for that purpose.

Count Dan's wife, Lady Seras Gate Vlad, was imprisoned in the top floor of the Vlad castle.
There was also the pretense of keeping her under guard there.

Because there was the fear of the former servants of the Vlad house coming to rescue Seras, the former head of guards Gigi was entrusted with the castle's defense. It was because he was the one with the most knowledge of the terrain inside and outside the castle.
Just in case, there were also 30 of the Vampire house's magicians ranked B-minus and over prepared for defense. Pylkkänen was not so dumb as to leave the defense to a traitor such as Gigi.

As their wages were paid from Count Dan Gate Vlad's fortunes, the brothers' pockets were barely hurting.

Seemingly having been thinking of something, Gigi knocked on the door to the room leading to the dining hall with his usual unfriendly face.

"…… Excuse me."

When he entered the room, the patriarch of the Vampire house Pylkkänen and his brother Ravino were eating meat while making loud [munch munch] noises. The elder brother was rotund and fat, while in contrast, his younger brother was thin and lanky.

This was the place where Count Dan, Lady Seras, and their daughter Chrisse used to amicably enjoy their meals, surrounded by their servants.
Gigi knew of those days of gentle atmosphere and pleasant conversations.

For that reason, he was the one who felt the biggest gap with the two pigs currently devouring their meals before him, but he did not say a word of it and fulfilled his role as the head of guards.

"I will be delivering today's report on Lady Seras Gate Vlad. Will it be alright?"
"I don't mind, continue."

With Pylkkänen's permission, he continued his report.

"She's taking her meals properly as usual, and is fine physically. If I dare say so, she seems to be lacking in exercise. She has ceased acting violently and is quietly abides by our orders, but she hasn't lost the shine in her eyes. She is probably saving up strength and looking for a chance to escape."
"Hmph, she's cheeky for a woman. My brother really has bad eyes for women, I'm appalled."
"Indeed, elder brother."

The younger brother was sucking up to his brother with his words.

"Also, I have the report from the slave house that the transport of Dan Gate Vlad had been completed without problems."

Gigi continued his report, not showing any reactions.

“Hmph, this way he won’t ever set foot on Demon Continent soil ever again. Fool that he is, he is still my blood-related brother, so I won’t take his life with my own hands. He should be thankful for that.”
“Indeed, elder brother.”

Actually, it’s not that they felt afraid that Dan would break out of his magic prevention choker by his own power and come back to them for revenge, but they didn’t have the courage to kill him themselves, so the reality was that they sold him as a slave because of that reason.

Simply because the patriarch of the vampire house Pylkkänen and his brother Ravino were small fry.

The former butler Merry and the others had already found out that Dan was sold as a slave.
They failed to take him back.
But they still hadn’t given up.

If only they could save Seras from confinement, Dan could return to them using his own strength.
This is what they strongly believed.

So they desperately tried to rescue her, but no matter if they did day or night attacks all of them ended in failure.

“In order to break their spirits, we’ll need Chrisse.”
“Indeed, elder brother.”

By simply increasing the rescue targets to two people it would make the objectives harder to fulfill.
Also, in order to make the mother, Seras, do as she’s told, there is nothing more effective than her child.
Then even if in the one in a million chance Dan came back, they could prevent him from doing anything by holding his daughter hostage.

“Then have you finally found Chrisse’s whereabouts?”
“…. No, that is…”
“You still haven’t found her!? Why couldn’t you even find ONE girl, and a good for nothing that couldn’t even use magic, at that!”

“Probably she had somebody’s help and left the continent…”
“Then catch her, go all around the world if necessary! You blockhead!”

Pylkkänen took hold of a plate with half-eaten meat in it and threw it at Gigi.

The patriarch’s half-eaten meat splattered on his face and clothes, but Gigi’s expression did not change in the least.

Pylkkänen let out a yell.

“Listen, you now have no other place to go but here. If I threw you out the former servants with a grudge on you would stab you in the back and kill you. If you don’t want to happen then give me some results! Understood!?”
“…. Understood. I shall make certain to bring Chrisse-ojousama to patriarch-sama.”

Gigi slowly bowed his head.
While they were having that exchange, there was a knock on the door.

Gigi’s next in command, a beast race man, entered the room alone.
He whispered in Gigi’s ear.

“…. Patriarch-sama. It seems like Merry is organizing a large group planning a rescue operation at the harbor town.”
“Tch, those idiots again… Gigi, go take your men and kill Merry and his gang. Be careful not to touch anyone from the other families.”
“Patriarch-sama, this might be a diversion. They had done so many attacks but this is the first time they started one so openly. It’s a trap to attack us with a flying column while our defenses are being shorthanded.”
“Don’t make me say it again! Our castle is strengthened by the Vampire house’s magicians in and out! Go take your men and kill those fools already! Or maybe you’d rather be kicked out of this castle right now!?”
“….. My apologies. I will immediately face them with my men.”

Gigi bowed his head politely and left the dining room with his subordinate in tow.

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—Lute's POV—

It was one in the morning and even the plants had become quiet.
Defenses were laid out with the castle in the center.
It's as if the enemy were proclaiming [we're on guard against any attack from outside].

This is all going as we wanted it to.

Merry-san and the others gathered at the port town as a diversion to draw the enemy's eyes.
Then as planned, they were wary of attacks from the outside.
The plan is for Snow and I to use a passage that leads inside the castle and rescue madam.

The one to get in touch with the vigilant Merry-san and the others was one of ojousama's friends—the Lamia, Muir Head.

According to Karen, it seems that she is the best at catching people's eyes.
It's surely because she's a snake, right?

Thanks to her the details of the plan safely reached Merry-san.

"But I thought they would take more people to Merry-san's side. Well, this much is still within expectations."

Beast race men were riding horned horses out of the castle.
They proceeded towards the harbor town.

The ones left in the castle was probably the vampire house—the magicians and men confident in their abilities.

Right now, the place we're returning to was in the middle of the woods behind the castle.
I was in the middle of getting as close to the castle as I possibly could and spying on the situation. Because I had finished what I needed to do, I retreated back to the log cabin in the middle of the woods.

After about one hour I was back at the small cabin.
Inside the log cabin, Snow and Meiya were already waiting.
Since there were only these two that had bad relations with each other (though it's just Snow hating Meiya…) there was a delicate and difficult atmosphere.

When I appeared, their faces brightened up in several senses of the term.

"Welcome back! Lute-sama!"
"Welcome back Lute-kun. How is the castle?"

"I'm back. They took the bait as planned. How are your preparations?"
"I've finished laying down the last of the traps in the woods. Chrisse-chan is ready, too."
"I've finished my preparations as well. I can go any time."

"All right. Well then Snow, should we begin our preparations."
"Un, all right."

Snow and I skillfully put on the equipment that were laid down on a rough table.

I was already wearing all-black clothes.

I put in two AK-47 banana magazines in each of the belt pouches hanging from my waist.
I also put a magazine in each magazine pouch attached to my vest.

I loaded the AK-47 with a magazine and pulled the cocking handle. One bullet made its way to the firing chamber.
I equipped a knife on my waist.

In my previous life, I think the number of assault rifle magazines prepared by army infantrymen [one loaded on the gun] + [6 spares].

I loaded one on the gun and prepared 6 spares, for a total of 7.
Which is about the average number.

Snow pushed the [S&W M10 4-inch] and [S&W M10 2-inch] into holsters hanging from her waist and breast.
The cylinders had of course been loaded with bullets.
Because I was busy with work on the sniper rifle, I had no time to make her her own AK-47, so I handed over my revolver.
With this Snow became a dual-wielding gunner.

Snow had 2 speedloaders in both pockets. (6 bullets × 2. By the way, speedloaders are accessories that arrange bullets into a circle that allow revolvers to be reloaded more quickly.)
On the vest that she wore just like I did, a loader called a [speed strip] was put in.
Compared to the speedloader that arranges the bullets in the same circular shape as the cylinder, the [speed strip] arranges 6 bullets with their primers down in a line.

The speed strip is a product that overturned the concept of unwieldiness. As a result, it became as thin as the average auto-pistol magazine and could even be carried in hand. As its weakness, loading bullets became a little bit slower but that can be compensated with the speedloaders.

Snow also had a knife equipped on her waist.
She was also shouldering a small sack.

Our bullets had a little bit of the heads removed from them and a thin piece of silver stuck in.
Silver is deadly poison to vampires.

The combined amount of our armaments is, by simple calculation, just enough to be able to kill all the guards in the castle.
However our goal in the end was madam's rescue. We didn't intend to massacre all the castle guards in the least.

The sky was cloudy and there was no light from the stars.
There was no signs of rain going to fall, either.
It was the perfect weather for a surprise attack.

I stretched my hand towards the log cabin's fireplace.
I had already examined the gimmick that opens the hidden passage as soon as I arrived at the cabin.

I strongly pushed on one part of the fireplace's interior wall.
Like in the fireplace inside the residence, one of the bricks in the flooring rose up. When I carefully pulled it up, it revealed an iron handle from behind it.

I took hold of the handle and opened the cover to the hidden passage with all my strength.

Firstly I poked just my head inside to check the situation.

"….. All right, there seems to be no problems."

There was nothing on the dust piled up in the passage besides my footprints from when we left the castle, showing that nobody had used this hidden passage besides me.
The patriarch of the vampire house did not notice this hidden passage.

I entered the passage first, followed by Snow.
After we went in, Meiya replaced the hidden passage's cover, and headed for her post.

“We should go then, Snow. Tell me if anything strange happens.”
“Un, alright, Lute-kun.”

We talked to each other then started off on the hidden passage towards the castle.

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Last time, I was carrying ojousama, and a one-way trip took 1 hour.
With me and Snow on foot, it took about 50 minutes.
We didn’t activate body strengthening to avoid notice from the guards on the surface.

Magicians are sensitive to magic power.
Which is why it is hard to kill a magician through a surprise attack using magic.
Since they could detect the magic power before the attack happens.

If on the off chance we were detected here by the guards on the surface, then the surprise attack will be a failure.

Even though we were not using body strengthening we felt almost no fatigue since we were just walking normally.

Once we reached the end of the passage I had Snow get up the stairs and check on the situation outside.
She had better nose and ears than humans for being a white wolf.
I wanted her to confirm that there was no sign of life on the other side of the door.

Snow touched her thumb with her index finger, and stretched out the other fingers.
It was the hand signal for [OK].
It was decided beforehand that once we're here we won't talk but instead use hand signals for communication.

I had Snow learn hand signals for that purpose.
This was one of those.

I switched places with her and pushed up the door to the hidden passage.
I temporarily handed the AK-47 over to Snow.

If it's just opening the door with just pure strength and not body strengthening, then I'm the best one for the job.
A loud, heavy grinding sound filled the place.

As the vanguard, I first poked my head out and confirmed the situation with my eyes.

….. no signs of people as far as I could see.
The dining room I had become so familiar with until a few months ago spread out before me.

I lifted the door, trying to make as little noise as possible, and infiltrated the castle.
I put the cover down and called Snow over.
She entered the dining room and handed the AK-47 over.

This time Snow went ahead of me, listening for signs of people across the door.
Moving inside the castle, I had Snow take the lead. She's the best one to work in the dark, using her nose and ears to quickly detect signs of people.

Ojousama and I made a detailed map of the castle, and had Snow memorize it.
We decided that I could take over the lead and change the route depending on the situation.

Just in case, I put the fireplace cover back on.

With the [S&W M10 2 inch] she was so familiar with in hand, Snow opened the door to the corridor, looked left and right, and called me over.

The two of us carefully walked the corridor, making almost no sound of footsteps.
It was because of the boots I specially made for this day.

In order to keep it from making sounds when I walked, I glued soft monster material to the soles. I inserted a plate made of magic liquid metal to the toe tips so they made good protective shoes.
Of course, if we ran with them they would certainly make sounds, but so long as we walked it was quiet. To start with, so long as we're far away they wouldn't notice.

We went towards the tower while minding our surroundings.
The entrance to the tower where madam was kept is roughly on the opposite side of the castle from where the dining room was.

The tower entrance was located underground.
You go one floor down via a stairway inside the castle, go through a door, continue on and there will be another door, if you open that door, go up the tower's spiral staircase, and open the door at the top, you will reach the VIP room where madam is kept.

It seemed to have originally been a room where they kept royal or elite noblemen as prisoners.
The bricks the tower was made of were specially-made, Mages' Association produced anti-magic bricks.

It seems to deflect magic over a certain amount.
Because the Mages' Association monopolized its production, it was several times more expensive than regular bricks.

Due to those bricks, it is virtually impossible to attack the tower with magic from the outside and rescue the prisoner inside.

If for instance you wanted to destroy the tower, you need to use large-scale magic that exceeds the capacity of the anti-magic bricks.
You'll need something so powerful it'll destroy the prisoner inside with it.

If your intent was assassination that wouldn't be a problem, but rescue is another matter entirely.

Snow, who went ahead stretched her hand out fully and extended her palm. The signal for 'Stop'.

She then wrapped her left index finger and thumb around the wrist of her right hand that was holding her revolver, with the other fingers outstretched. The sign for 'Enemy'.
She let go of her wrist and extended 2 fingers.
In other words, it looks like there were 2 people on patrol coming our way.

She questioned me with the signal for 'Battle'.
I shook my head.

To let the patrol pass, we opted to hide under cover while holding our breath.
I hid under a desk with a flower vase on it, and Snow hid behind a metal full-body armor.

"…. sheesh, I can't do this, going on patrol this late."
"Quit complaining. This is your job. It's fine so long as we get paid."
"Well, getting paid is certainly good, but they're working us rough."

A 2-man group appeared as they turned the corner grumbling.
Now that they've come this far I can hear their conversation with my own ears.

"There there, I'll take you out for a drink next time, after I get paid. I found a nice place."
"A nice place, huh. A nice place for you is probably someplace you can go gambling."
"Don't say that. It's hard if I go there alone. You can drink as much as you like, okay."
"'It's hard to go there alone', what are you, a kid?"

The men passed by us, laughing, and turned the next corner.
After a short while the painful silence returned and we got out from our hiding places.

“!?”

As Snow got out from her hiding place, her arm lightly knocked the metal armor.
That moment the armor’s long battleaxe started to slant, and fell down towards the floor.

I slung the AK-47 to my back and dived!
I barely made it and caught the long axe as it was about to fall on the floor and make a loud clang.
We let out a sigh in relief.

After putting the axe back in its original stand I lightly pulled on Snow’s ear.
She put her hands together in apology.

We got our grips together and continued.

Snow ordered me to stop.
We were on a straight path with nothing in it.
If we continued down this path, turned right, continued again, and turned left, we would reach the tower’s underground entrance.

Snow called me over so she could talk to my ear instead of using hand signals.

(*Lute-kun, this hallway is rigged with a barrier.*)
(*Barrier?*)
(*There’s a magic device you surround your bed with when you make camp in the middle of a trip. When an animal crosses the bounded space it makes a loud sound only the user can hear to let them know.*)

If I’m not mistaken, 3 years ago those fake adventurers also drove some stake-looking things into the ground when we made camp.
I recalled a difficult trauma.

But I’m glad I had Snow go ahead to be sure.
If there were magic traps there’s no way I would notice.

(*You think you can disarm it?*)
(*No problem, but it'll take some time, is that alright?*)
(*How much time do you need?*)
(*Probably about 5 minutes, I think.*)
(*Fine if it's that much… Don't use magic, okay. They'll notice you.*)
(*I know that of course.*)

Snow put down the hammer to her revolver and holstered that favorite gun of hers.
In order to disarm the trap she crouched down on a corner of the floor.

There were some stake-looking things put on the left and right walls.
Looks like they're the barrier devices Snow mentioned.

…… 3 minutes into disarming the traps, Snow suddenly stood up.
She gripped her right wrist with her left hand, stretching out 2 fingers—The patrols roaming the castle are headed our way!

This is a totally straight hallway, and there's no room to hide.
With the sole exception of a large vase where about 2 children could fit in.

Not having any other choice, we hurriedly hid inside the vase.
Though I said 2 children could fit inside, it's still a vase after all.
There was no space inside, and Snow and I had to hug facing each other.

I could feel the sensation of her grown up soft chest through her vest and cartridges.

No time to fully enjoy the sensation, footsteps and the sound of conversation can be heard even inside the vase.

"Did you really see a person's shadow?"
"Yeah, I trust my eyes. I only caught a glimpse but I definitely saw something move."
"But the magicians and our friends are fortifying the outside, not even a rat should be able to get in. How did they get in here."
"Hell if I know."

The two continued their conversation.
They seem to be on guard from surprise attacks because they saw

something.
But they couldn't find any shadow anywhere.

"…. Looks like you're seeing things after all."
"But I'm pretty sure I saw a shadow moving."

"It looks like we're going to get through this safely."
I unintentionally let out a sigh of relief.

Suddenly, my eyes met with Snow's while we were still hugging each other. Her pink lips were there right before my eyes. There was the sweet scent of her breaths, and her pearl-white teeth. Because of her excessive charms, I unintentionally drew my head back to take some distance.

clunk–

"Who goes there!"
[[!?]]

I had misjudged the distance and the back of my head hit the vase, making a light sound!
Of course, the patrol duo noticed and called out.
Snow's blameful gaze is painful.

They faced towards the direction of the sound–the vase and raised their voices.

"Oi, is there somebody in there?"

There were the sound of footsteps coming close.

Snow asked with her eyes, [Are we going for it now?]
However, the tower entrance is still quite a long way off. Still, we're definitely going to be found as we are. I guess it's sink or swim now…?

The footsteps were coming even closer.

"Squeak"
"Uwaa! What the… it's a rat?"

It seems that a rat appeared from behind the vase and scurried away.
The tension between the two men loosened.

"Looks like you saw a rat's shadow. Never thought your eyes would be *too* good, eh."
"Hahaha, that's for sure. But the higher-ups told us not to let even a rat pass through. This means we're doing our jobs right, huh?"
"Right."

The men laughed as they resumed their patrols.
Snow and I each let out a sigh of relief simultaneously.

I never thought I'd really be owing favor to a rat. Thanks to it I was able to keep my head.

After confirming they had taken their distance from us, Snow signalled that it was okay to come out.
We vacated the vase, taking care not to make any sound.

This time, Snow returned the favor and pulled my ear.
I pressed my hands together in apology, like she did a while ago.
Then, Snow once again went to work disarming the barrier.

The barrier was disarmed after about 3 minutes from when she resumed work on it.
Due to it being a cheap item, it's structure was rather simple, and it wasn't too difficult to render it inoperable.
We're lucky they're not ones intended for indoor security.

We gathered back our spirit and went for the tower entrance.
We turned right, went straight, and there was a door to our left.

Snow stopped to a halt.
She told me with a hand signal that there were 2 people from their scents, men, probably carrying magic-boosting staves. She was able to judge all that from the scent of the special wood.

I signalled her back that we're going to break in here at once.
Snow will handle the guard on the left, I will handle the one on the right.

As we had decided beforehand, we were to go all out with our magic and run up the tower in one stroke.
It was a race against time.

Snow gripped her beloved gun tightly.
I also made sure of my grip on the stock of my AK-47, and counted down with my left hand.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1–

“Go!”
“!?”

We immediately gave our bodies an assist with body strengthening.
We jumped out from the cover of the corridor and aimed the AK-47 and revolver at our respective targets.

Chapter 045 – Blooming

The enemies were taken aback by our sudden attack, but as you would expect from someone entrusted to guard the entrance to the tower where madam is, they were magicians.

They reflexively constructed defense barriers.
From the level of their skills I figured they were magicians of at least rank B.

But without minding that, I selected full-automatic fire and pressed the trigger.
Bracing for the muzzle flash, sound of gunfire, and recoil, I aimed at the enemy's leg.
The man on the right had prepared a defense barrier but it was easily pierced.

"Gyaa!!"

Fresh blood spurted out from the enemy's leg.

In my vision that had gone slow-motion thanks to visual strengthening, I noticed that Snow had hit the man on the left she was in charge of with the S&W revolver, but it was repelled by his defense barrier.
Looks like he released quite some magic and built a strong one in an instant.

Sheesh, this guy is well-prepared.

Still pressing my AK-47's trigger, I slid to the side. With the bullets being shot in full automatic, they found their way inside the enemy.

"Gugaa…h!!!"

Though the barrier was effective against 9mm bullets, it stood no chance against the 7.62mmR. The barrier was easily pierced, and the man was shot through the leg.

“Yo, you bastards! How did you get in here—Baah!?”

The man I shot down earlier started raising his voice, but Snow immediately kicked him unconscious.
She also likewise kicked the other man unconscious.

Of course, I noticed her move and already stopped my firing.
As childhood friends who were left in the orphanage on the same day and lived together, harmony is our specialty.

While popping the empty bullets out of the cylinder and reloading it from the magazine, Snow called out to me.

“Lute-kun! The lock please!”
“Leave it to me!”

[What was that sound!?]
[An intruder!? Oi, what are the guys outside doing!]
[It’s the tower! The tower is under attack!]

We heard men’s voices from throughout the castle.
They noticed the presence of intruders from the strange sound (gunfire) and the magic power from body strengthening.
They knew all too well that the tower where madam is would be the target.
For a castle this well defended, not even an idiot would invade for the money and goods.

It would’ve been best if we immediately opened the door and went into the tower… but the problem lies with the door.
The door was bulky and made of metal, and it had a lock attached to an iron bar as thick as a child’s arm. The wall around the door was of course made of anti-magic bricks.

Normally the gatekeepers would be holding the keys, but as a precaution against intruders they would often hold identical dummy keys.
There was no time to try each and every one in turn.

In other words, to break this door open without a key within a short time, you’ll need magic powerful enough to either destroy the metal door or the anti-magic bricks.

But there was no time to chant the spell for that.
In the first place, if you use magic poorly, even if you could break the door open, the magic power released would be high enough to destroy the area surrounding the door, burying the passage. In the end, you wouldn't be able to get in.

Other than magic, another way to break the lock open is by cutting it using a sword, but you need sufficient skill and power for that.
The door was made of heavy metal, and the lock was also well made.

It was at the level where only a famous master could do something about it.
There was nobody around us with that kind of skill.
There was the possibility of using body strengthening and a heavy axe to forcibly cut the door apart. If we go back a bit we could take the axe from the metal armor…. but while we did that the guards would have gathered here.

However, in my hands I hold an AK-47.
It had the power to pierce through an NIJ (National Institute of Justice) [Level III A++]-ranked bulletproof vest.

It would be impossible for normal bullets to pierce through the heavy metal door, but the lock isn't so much of a problem.

I aimed at the lock and fired in semi-auto mode.

BANG!

The lock easily flew apart.

Snow and I went inside the doorway as if diving in.
Snow pushed the open door closed, put her beloved gun away, and turned both her hands toward the door.

"Hark my call o dragon of ice and snow. Let forth a world of glaciers before me! Permafrost!"

Ice, it was melded magic of Ice.
At elementary level you can use 1 kind.

At intermediate level you can meld 2 kinds.
At the advanced level you can meld over 3 kinds of magic.

The door was jammed with ice from the inside.
Now even if the lock was broken, they won't be able to get inside so easily.
It was plenty enough to buy time with.

I heard Snow call from behind me and destroyed the lock on the next door.
Right then, my magazine ran out of bullets so I replaced it.
I packed fresh bullets into the magazine.

I opened the door, let Snow inside, and ran up the stairs in one stroke with body-strengthening-enhanced strides.

In less than a minute I reached the top floor of the tower where madam was imprisoned.
The door looked sturdy but unlike the two at the bottom of the tower it was made with careful workmanship.
It wasn't hard to break through for being an ordinary door.

"Madam, are you alright? It's Lute!"
[Lute!? You came to save me on your own?]
"Let's save the details for later! Please step away from the door for a moment. It's dangerous to be in front of the door so please move aside."
[All right.]

I broke through the door using my body-strengthened shoulder.
The door was blown into the room, hinge and all.
Inside the room there was Lady Seras Gate Vlad who I hadn't seen for several months, since Karen's surprise party.

She was wearing an undecorated one-piece dress that looked like pajamas.
She looked a little lean, maybe from lack of exercise.
Furthermore, her breasts seemed to have grown bigger.

However, as far as I can see there were no traces of her having been hurt or tortured.
I stroked my chest in relief.

“Lute, have you really come to save me?”
“Ma, madam!?”

Overcome with emotion, madam hugged me from the front like she did the day we first met.
My face was buried in her plump bosom.
It felt good, and the scent of a grown woman, unlike Snow or ojousama, made me feel dizzy.

Madam released her hands off me, and then she looked at Snow with interest.

“Oh my, this person here is?”
“My fianceé, Snow.”
“This is the first time I heard that Lute had a fianceé! Nice to meet you, my name is Seras Gate Vlad. I am really thankful to you for coming to save me.”
“Nice to meet you, I’m Lute-kun’s fianceé, Snow. It is I who should thank you for saving Lute-kun’s life.”
“Not at all, in fact I’m the one who should be thanking him. Even my husband called him a good purchase. By the way, I sensed some strong magic power from below, was it you? It might be a little impertinent of me, but could you kindly tell me your rank?”
“I’m A-minus ranked. The S-ranked magician Freezing Witch-sama gave me the nickname [Witch of Ice and Snow].”
“Oh my, that’s amazing. Reaching A-minus rank at such an age, and to be given a nickname by the S-ranked magician Freezing Witch-sama, too. Not even royalty could do that.”
“I’ve considered that I might not live up to the name, but this and that happened so I received the name.”
“I wonder if you could tell me about it if you have time. I love adventure stories like that. My husband—Dan Gate Vlad also had all sorts of fun stories. The time when he slept in the dungeon was most amusing—”
“Madam! Snow! Please leave the talk for later. We’re really short on time here!”

The uproar from below had become louder.
They had started to use strong magic that even I could sense.

Snow took down the bag she was carrying and took out a white clay-like blob.

“Madam, can I have you squat down for a little bit?”

She followed Snow’s instructions.
She started covering the magic prevention collar wound around madam’s neck with the clay-like material.

The magic prevention collar served three functions.
First—While within visual range, the one powering the collar can make it shrink so as to suffocate the wearer.
Second—It could give the user information on the wearer’s whereabouts.
Third—Were the collar to be forcibly taken off, the wearer shall be killed by the magic applied on the collar.

This clay-like material served to disable the first function.
It was something given to us by Meiya, she guaranteed it’s effectiveness.

Next, as long as the collar was worn, madam’s location would still be known and she would be continuously pursued. If the collar were to be clumsily removed, she would die.

However, according to Meiya, it seems that it wouldn’t be hard to remove the collar given the right tools, time, and skills.
Therefore the plan is for us to take madam, cross over the forest 1 km behind the castle, and take her on a covered coach we parked on the main road.
Special unlocking tools that Meiya brought in were already set up inside the covered coach.

Of course, the genius magic device developer Meiya, who had the skills to unlock the magic prevention collar, is on standby inside.
What’s left to do is to just run away until the collar is unlocked.

I took out a softball-sized sphere from Snow’s backpack and put it aside.
I unfastened the AK-47’s magazine and replaced it with the one in my lower back pocket.
These are the special items I prepared for this day.

“Lute-kun, preparations all done.”
“I’m done, too. Snow, proceed as planned please.”
“Roger!”

Still with the backpack on, Snow increased her body strengthening.

“Madam, if you’ll excuse me.”
“Oh my oh my.”

Snow picked up madam in a princess carry.
I gave her instructions as she was being carried.

“Madam, it might be a little suffocating but please hold your breath when I say so.”
“Uhuhuhu, this reminds me of when my husband princess-carried me for the first time…. Yeah, that was the night we first met each other on the boat. We fell in love at first sight that day.”
“Madam!”
“Uhuhu, alright. When Lute gives the signal I’m to hold my breath, right.”
“Please. Well then let’s go Snow!”
“OK, any time!”

I boosted my body with body strengthening.
With the AK-47 in full auto I barraged the wall of stacked bricks with bullets.
Once that magazine is finished, I took out a second one and unleashed another barrage.

The ammo I barraged the wall with is a special kind—armor piercing rounds.

The usual bullet cores were made of ersatz-lead, but this time the cores were made of ersatz-tungsten wrapped in ersatz-lead. A thin jacket is wrapped around it to make the cartridge.

Armor piercing rounds were built to punch through materials like iron plates.

No matter how “anti-magic” these bricks are, they shouldn’t be able stand against something that can go through iron plates.
I made bullet holes around a section of wall about the size a person could go through.

“One-two!”

I covered my entire body in magic power for just 10 seconds and did a roundhouse kick.

The bunch of bricks danced in the air and fell down.
The sound of the bricks falling was heard throughout the castle.

At this point I've used up half of my magic power.

I replaced the magazine and picked up the softball-sized sphere, then jumped out towards the castle walls through the hole in the tower.
Snow was carrying madam.
Deceleration and body strengthening had of course been handled by her magic.

It was dark down below, but the castle walls could be faintly seen, we then jumped on top of it.
It wasn't the time to be lingering about, but there were of course guards that were standing watch outside gathered beneath the walls.

It was obvious given the flashy way we made our escape route.
This is where the ball I prepared comes in handy.

"Madam! Please hold your breath!"

Just before I jumped down the castle wall, I gave madam the signal.
There were the guards on watch down below. I forcefully threw the ball in my hand at them.

The ball hit the ground and exploded.
A huge cloud of smoke came out.

"A smokescreen!? This much is no big deal, I can… *cough*! *cough*!?"
"M, my body…"
「これは銀か！？」
"Is this silver!?"

There was silver dust mixed in with the smoke.
Silver is deadly poison to vampires.
The silver filled their lungs by being breathed in.

The moment we landed, we swiftly ran amidst the confusion.

We headed towards the forest 1 km away.
Once we reached that place, it would be our win.
500 meters remaining.

“!? Lute-kun! Get behind me!”

Snow’s warning.
Flame swords, water spears, and lightning axes danced, blocking our way.
Still holding on to madam, Snow hid me behind her back and opened a barrier.
It blocked all the magic attacks.

Ten-odd men appeared out of the shadows where the magic was fired from.

…tch!?
“I see, so the ringleader was Lute. I thought it was too cunning for Merry.”

It was the first time I saw him in months.
Gigi-san’s figure almost hadn’t changed.
He looked just like the time when he was happy about ojousama going outside in order to get over her trauma.

That Gigi-san who shouldn’t have changed pointed out my mistakes like he usually did.

“But you’re too naïve. You overdid the acting you used as diversion. Intelligence is best when you make them think and consider and find out about it. That’s because intelligence they happen upon by themselves is one that they would believe in the most.”

The men, mainly of the beast race, fanned out behind our back, encircling us.
They were probably the men in Gigi-san’s direct command.
Their eyes shined with a hired professional’s light, absolutely not willing to let madam escape.

Under the lead of Gigi-san, they set about to block our way.
Despite supposedly standing in front of me as enemies, I still considered that it might be a lie, that he might be a fake.

"…… Why are you over on that side, Gigi-san? For what reason did you betray master, madam, Merry-san and the servants, and Ojousama?"

The first words out of my mouth after several months were not ones of denigration, but questioning as to his motives.
I was sure that he was forced into betrayal because there was someone he know or a friend being held hostage.

Though he was taciturn and looked frightening, Gigi-san treasured the Vlad house more than anyone.
He crafted so many plans and chaperoned ojousama out of worry for her.
No way that kind of person would truly turn traitor.

But his reply was as usual, unrestrained and indifferent.

"I don't mind talking now, but are you sure? We're not your only enemies you know."

Gigi-san pointed behind me.
The smokescreen had cleared, and vampires who weren't swallowed by the fumes were closing in on us.
Wolf in the front gate, Vampire in the back.

"Lute-kun…"
"…. that's right isn't it. There's lots to do before asking your reasons. First I have to safely get out of here and lead madam to safety."
"If you can, that is."

Gigi-san and his men took a solid stance.
Behind us there were the vampires who escaped the smokescreen bearing down on us.

Normally, one would think we had no way to escape.

However, I unhurriedly raised my left hand, waving it round and round, sending a signal.

The others besides Snow and I made dubious expressions, not knowing my intention.

“What’s this, signalling surrender? Then rather than that you should unhand the hostage and—gaaaah!”

There was a popping sound.
At the same time, the beastman standing beside Gigi-san collapsed on the spot.
There was a hole in his left thigh and blood splattering everywhere.

BANG.

“Gaaah!?”

Another man beside him collapsed in the same way, holding his leg.
This time it was the thigh on his right leg.

“Snow!”
“Got it!”

Only Snow and I was not bewildered and escaped the siege net through the hole created by the collapsed men.

“After them! Don’t let them escape!”

Only one, Gigi-san reacted to the sudden situation, and made the order to chase after us—

BANG.

A man who reflexively reacted to the order collapsed, holding his leg.

Another invisible attack.

Gigi concentrated magic power in his eyes, trying to firstly figure where the attack was coming from.

“!? Is that Ojousama!”

Then he noticed her a long way away, about 500 meters—on the boundary between the forest and plain grounds.

At that distance he couldn’t see her if it weren’t for the magical eyesight strengthening.
Ojousama was standing on one knee, holding a long, cylindrical weapon.

It was the kneeling shot position.
Every time she shoots, a [7.62mm×51 NATO round] came flying out at about 838 meters per second.

They didn’t know that.
They were not aware what kind of terrible monster they were now standing before….

It was the moment for the trump card on our side—of Chrisse Gate Vlad to bloom—!

Chapter 046 – Rifleman's Creed

Out in the distance, about 500 meters away, Chrisse was holding in her arms a long, black, cylindrical weapon.
Gigi saw it with his magically strengthened eyesight, and set out to give orders to his subordinates, but

BANG.

"GAAAAH!"

Another popping sound.
Almost immediately one of the vampires going after Lute collapsed, holding his stomach.
Hit by a bullet.

(*No mistaking it now. I don't know what magic or magic device it is, but seems she could strike from 500 meters away in the dark without any starlight.*)

Gigi calmly analyzed the situation, the impressive range and accuracy of the attack made him shudder even though he could feel no magic power from it.

(*Damn that cursed thing! Never in my long life have I seen anything like that. Chrisse-ojousama is going easy on us now so she only struck legs and stomachs, but just one shot of this to the head and it'll be instant death. We'll be killed before we noticed we're dead.*)

No matter how much Gigi concentrated, he could not perceive the flow of magic nor its outbreak. This is precisely why the magicians could be taken by surprise and killed without them knowing it.

The atrociousness of the weapon made the spine along Gigi's back shiver.

Luckily it didn't seem to be able to fire rapidly.
Everytime the popping sound is heard, Chrisse gave a pull on some lever-like thing with her hand.
Another interlude, then another popping sound, that was proof of that.

Gigi immediately gave his orders.

"Enemy attack, distance is 500 meters! Attack is from unknown magic or magic device! No rapid fire! Half of you tend to the wounded, the other half follow me!"

Being professionals they immediately moved according to the head of guards, Gigi's orders.

As ordered, half the men tended to the wounded, the other half went in pursuit of Lute.

The number of pursuers were ten-odd people, beastmen and vampires.
All of them were the surviving B-minus ranked magician strongmen.

"Don't let her aim at you, move forward while making evasive moves!"

They proceeded to pursue Lute, moving left and right as if avoiding arrows, all according to Gigi's orders.
The distance to the target is 200~250 meters.
Gigi's group proceeded using zig-zagging movement to not let her aim at them, creating a bit of distance with the target. However, it is now still possible for them to catch up with this distance.

Furthermore, beastmen and vampires, who have night eyes, have the advantage in the dark forest.
Then there's the magic prevention choker attached to Seras' neck.
As long as she has that on her, no matter where she goes they will be aware of her location, and then there's also magic that will kill her if she tries to take the collar off without using the special key.

Even if they could run an hour's distance away, there's no way Seras would slip away.
Moreover, their fighting force is Lute, Chrisse, and the white magician—Snow.

Gigi, from his senses honed through the long years, was able to figure out Snow's value from her magic power and her behavior as a mage.
She was an annoying opponent, but not one they couldn't defeat as a group.

Lute and Chrisse had no talent as magicians, but they were armed with unusual weapons.

(*Invisible attacks are certainly troubling, but it was* that *strong. There's no way they could keep using it forever.*)

As Gigi expected, there was a limit to Lute and Chrisse's bullets.
They believed that they could take them down with the quantity of their magic power.

Even if the enemy had prepared more forces, it would be enough to hold them back when the time comes.
It would be enough if they bought time until their fallen comrades recovered.

(*In other words, this escape drama is just a game of tag that we're bound to win from the start.*)

Gigi clenched his teeth, glaring at the backs of the escapees.

Lute, Snow, and Seras entered the forest.
After a delay Chrisse stopped her firing, and followed behind them.

About 200 meters behind them, Gigi and his troops stepped into the forest.
For Lute, this is a forest that he knew really well, but for Gigi, this place is practically his own backyard.

There should be no such thing as professionals who don't understand a forest that was right beside them.

"GUAAAH!"

However, the first screams came up from among the pursuers.

“What happened!?”
“M, my leg! There’s something sticking into my leg!”

There was a pitfall trap containing thin blades with barbs attached that dug halfway into the beastman’s lower leg through his leather shoes.
Although they were thin, they were strong. They easily pierced through sole and foot just by the force of his body weight.

“GUEEE!?”
“T, there’s one here too! Darda’s squirming while holding his throat! T, this one is…. thin metal lines stretched out!?”
“Goddammit! They, they’ve turned the forest full of traps!”

The young vampire man called Darda was shedding fresh blood from his throat and fell to the ground writhing.
His allies used healing magic on him in a hurry, but it seems there was silver in the traps.

His allies hurriedly made him drink anti-silver drug.
Not even 10 meters into the forest, and they already had 2 casualties.

The forest that should’ve been like their own backyard had been laid out with traps like the jungles of Vietnam.
Gigi chided his panicked subordinates.

“Get a hold of yourselves! These are amateur traps! We won’t get caught if we moved carefully!”

This is a trick they’ve used, and others used on them before.
Slowing down the enemy’s advance by laying traps on their path.
Gigi and his men took careful steps and proceeded, avoiding the traps.

—BANG.

“GUAAAA!”

The man carefully probing and disarming the traps was shot down in the shoulder with a [7.62mm×51 NATO round] and collapsed.

“Get down! It’s the invisible attack from earlier! Get down!”

Gigi’s men obeyed his orders and got down on the spot, but the screams didn’t stop.

—BANG.

“AAAAAH!”

—BANG.

“GAAA!”

“WHYYY! We got down but why do the attacks still hit!”

The man next to Gigi shouted out, half in panic.

(*Ojousama is probably on a high spot and looking down towards us.*)

There were gentle sloped hills in the forest.
It wasn’t hard to hit even a prone target when one aims from a high point.

(*The one thing I don’t understand is how in the world could she accurately pinpoint our positions in the dark night without starlight…*)

Like lightning, a flash ran through Gigi’s mind.

“!? Stop your body strengthening! She’s aiming by detecting your magic power!”

By Gigi’s orders, the men immediately cut off their magic.
The reason is obvious if they calmly thought about it.
Chrisse’s magic power was used from a distance and in small quantities so they couldn’t detect it. It was hard to find her from where Gigi and his men were.

Gigi and his men stood up once again, and proceeded forwards while on the lookout for traps… however,

—BANG.

“GUAAAAA!”

The shoulder of the man next to Gigi was hit and fresh blood scattered everywhere.

“IT HURTS! IT HURTS! WHY?! I WAS SURE I CUT OFF MY MAGIC! WHY!?”
“Calm down! Calm down and use healing on yourself!”
“Nnn gigigigigi—”

The man put together all his concentration.
A whistling sound that froze the spine on Gigi’s back passed by the tip of his nose.

“AAAAAH!”

The leg of the man who was about to apply healing jumped up.
It was because he was hit on the buttocks.

—BANG.

“AAAAAAH!!!”

Next, his other leg was shot.

“Goddammit! GODDAMMIT!!! WHY ONLY ME!! STOP IT!”

The man fainted, in tears, nose dripping, and drooling in agony from the pain he had never experienced before.

The terror was contagious.
This was a warning from Chrisse that she could torment all the men in the forest, including Gigi to death in the same way if she so chose—through the man who fainted in agony in front of their eyes.
She had plenty of reasons to want to do that.

The men’s morale visibly dropped.

With cold sweat running through his brow, Gigi thought about a question.

(*How could she accurately figure out our positions and launch attacks in the dark night without starlight?*)

There was no sign of her looking for them with magic.
They also didn't use magic so they shouldn't have been detectable…

(*!? That's right! She could have simply figured our positions out by eyesight!?*)

Gigi knew.
Chrisse's eyesight and night vision was outstandingly high even among vampires.
She was a talent, a prodigy, a genius who once shot down a fruit bat dancing in the dark night using a bow.
Now that she has that invisible long range magic attack device, she was like a fish in water.

Gigi was at last filled with terror right through to the core.

(*Ojousama has no talent!? You've got to be kidding me! She's more of a problem than Master!*)

Dan Gate Vlad was strong.
However, strong is all he was.
If Gigi had to fight Dan face to face, he would run away with all his might.

If he ran away and hid himself, he didn't have to worry about getting killed.
He was proud to possess the strength to be able to run away from Dan—from an A-ranked magician, a rank that only a few geniuses were able to reach.

(*But Ojousama's ability—her strength is more than that…!*)

From a long range and without any magic that could be sensed, she could deliver an attack that carried instant death.
He would never know when he would die!
No matter how strong he was, the moment he stopped running his head could crack open like a red strawberry being smashed.

In other words, when it comes to facing Chrisse, there was nothing else to do but shiver in fear of not knowing when he would be killed, even if he could run away.
It was obvious which one is more fearsome.

Not only Gigi, his subordinates also became aware of that truth, and trembled.
They did not know how soon she would pierce holes through their heads on a whim.

The hands of a god of death gently caressed the faces of everyone there.

The clouds parted and starlight shone through like a spotlight, illuminating one corner of the forest.
Under that light, Chrisse Gate Vlad was standing, holding her M700P.
Her distance from Gigi and his men was over 200 meters.

Hugging the M700P, she moved her throat that can't speak because of trauma, moving her lips as if singing a song.

Her voice could not be heard.
The men there were simply captivated by her, and stopped in their tracks.

Chrisse continued moving her throat and lips.

Gigi and his men didn't know.
The song she was singing to herself right now was something taught by Lute, the [Rifleman's Creed] chanted by the United States Marine Corps.

In his previous life, Hotta Youta—Lute was weak in English.
However, he was entranced by this [Rifleman's Creed] and worked with all his might to memorize it.

Then when he recited it to Chrisse, she was strangely captivated by it and memorized it as well.
She could not release her voice because of trauma, but she concentrated on chanting this [Rifleman's Creed], insisting that she be able do so accurately.

She chanted.

This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine

My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life

My rifle, without me, is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than my enemy who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will……

My rifle and myself know that what counts in this war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, nor the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit……

My rifle is human, even as I, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strength, its parts, its accessories, its sights and its barrel. I will keep my rifle clean and ready. We will become part of each other. We will

Before God, I swear this creed. My rifle and I are the defenders of my family. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life

So be it, until victory is ours and there is no enemy

A young girl who could bestow death upon them sang soundlessly.

They had no idea what the young girl was whispering.
Her blonde hair sparkled beautifully under the starlight, her innocent childlike face was lovely, rousing one's protective instincts.
But she was holding in her arms a pitch-black magic weapon that could turn them into lumps of meat in an instant, hugging it tenderly like it was her own child.

White and Black.
Light and Darkness.
Life and Death.

The scene in that place was fantastic, giving them visions of all the world being in that place. It was awe-inspiring.

“HYAAAAAAAAA!!!”

Unable to hold back his fear, one of the men turned tail and broke into a run.

“L, like I’m letting myself get killed! This isn’t worth however much they’re paying me!”

He used body strengthening at full power on his legs, aiming to break out of the forest, but…

—BANG!

“GAAAAA!”

Chrisse mercilessly shot out his buttocks from behind.
No matter how much he used body strengthening, it wasn’t a technique that could outrun a bullet at twice the speed of sound.

Chrisse yanked the bolt.
Clink—the empty ammo cartridge fortuitously struck a stone buried on the ground, sounding the ending bell of the match.

Thick clouds once again hid the starlight.
Chrisse’s figure melted, disappearing into the darkness.

There was a brief silence.
Taking this as a chance, another of Gigi’s men made a reckless attempt to run away.

“…… GYAAAA!!!”

He tried to run swiftly like an arrow using body strengthening, and yet Chrisse’s bullet pierced his abdomen as if drawn there by a thread.
Chrisse will not allow anyone to run from this place.

Furthermore, the popping sound came from a greater distance than before.
Even while retreating, Chrisse was giving them an angry glare.

huff *huff* *huff*

Gigi's and his men's breathing became short and rough.
The cause was the fear they felt.

It was clearly not a game of tag they're bound to win.
They were cleverly led down to the monster's mouth—to a place of death.

(*But, we're not defeated yet. If we could pin down madam in the end then it would be our win.*)

So long as she was wearing the magic prevention choker, Gigi and the others could find out Seras' whereabouts any time.

(*First we should somehow get out of here. Then find out madam's location and launch an attack*—)

Gigi pulled together his battered down emotions, and switched his thoughts over.

As he was thinking about how to escape the forest, a light exploded high in the sky.
Unknown to Gigi, this was Lute's signal to Chrisse to withdraw, saying that [the collar is off].

After a short while, Chrisse's presence vanished completely.
It was about 30 minutes later that Gigi and his men realized this fact.

Chapter 047 – Vampire

Let us turn back the clock a little bit.

“Lute-kun are you okay? Should I slow down a bit?”
“I… I’m okay, I can still keep going.”

We left ojou-sama to hold them back and cut through the forest.
My current magic power is at about a third left.
Even though Snow used magic while carrying the madam in her arms, I dont feel her magic power weakening.

This is the difference that having talent in magic makes..
The madam let out a worried sigh at us.

“If this choker could be removed, I could also run with my own legs.”
“Dont be concerned, besides, we will be out of the forest soon.”

Just like I said, we were finally out of the forest.
Jumping down from this vertical cliff, at the rendezvous point was a wagon stationed there.
Yoshi, just as we planned!

Inside the wagon, Meiya came to meet us.

“Welcome back Lute-sama! It seems you were able to rescue your benefactor safely.”
“Meiya, I’ll leave it to you. Snow come help her. Right now we are in the middle of the operation, so will you two please cooperate?”
“Muu, I understand.”

My warning was to Snow in particular.
She pouted at my warning.

While I let out a sigh, the coachman whip the horse.
There was no reason to stay in this place forever.

Inside the wagon, Meiya started a conversation with the madam.

“Nice to meet you madam, I am Lute-kun’s first pupil Meiya Dragoon.”
“That’s very polite of you, I’m Seras Gate Vlad. I thank you for your assistance. Meiya — why is that genius magic tool developer is in the demon continent?”
“Everything is according to Lute-sama’s will..”
“Is Meiya-san also Lute’s fiancée?”
“En… Engaged!? no, no, such dreadness! however if such thing was proposed could I possibly refuse? Rather, I don’t have any reason to refuse!”

Meiya’s maiden face redden, and she fumbled around with her fingers.
No, enough with such talk, i wish you would start preparing to unfasten that magic prevention choker.

“Muu~~~ that’s wrong! This person is not Lute-kun fiancee! Don’t say bad things about Lute-kun!”
… She was badmouthing Lute-kun, too!”

Because of madam’s remark, Snow puffed her cheek.
Her remark also made Meiya collapse, like being hit in the head with a hammer.

“UuUu, at that time i have yet to be touched by Luke-sama’s magnificence, i was ignorant…. anyway, now i’ll be removing madam’s choker.”
“Choker? but if it’s not unlocked with the key, the magical curse will kill mel”
“However, if its left alone it will give away your location to the enemy.”
“Ooo, this choker also had that kind of functionality huh.”
“Yes, that’s why I don’t know when we are going to get attacked, so I need to remove it. Of course i am a genius follower of Lute-sama the magic tool developer Meiya Dragoon! This level of choker i could easily remove without any difficulty. Therefore do not be concerned.”

However, she added.

“Unlocking it would require approximately 30 minutes.”

Even with Meiya's level of expertise in magical tools and the special tools prepared it would still take 30 minutes….
Of course its impossible for an amatuer to unlock a magic prevention choker.

"Won't we get attacked while we're doing that?"
"It's alright. Right now, Chrisse-chan is keeping the enemy at bay!"

Snow energetically replied.
In madam's expression float a hint of worry.
Not for her own safety, but for her daughter.

"As I thought, that was not a mistake. Is that girl capable of keeping Gigi and the others at bay?"
"She can! Because Chrisse-chan had become very strong!"

To blow away madam worries, Snow cheerfully answered.
Both me and Snow had the same opinion.
Instead, I'm worried that she went overboard.

I believe the talent ojou-sama has, was more than just what imagined.

Especially in night battles.
The way that she could shoot out targets even with only her normal non-body-strengthened eyesight in the dark was, in a word, shocking.
In the previous world, a U.S. army sniper that could snipe game in the night is called a 'Vampire'."

Ojou-sama, who demonstrated the most power in night warfare is definitely a 'Vampire'

"So, let's start. Could you please lie down?"

As per Meiya instruction, madam lie down on the platform.

"Light please."

With Snow's magic, the wagon interior was illuminated.
Meiya begun to disassemble the choker with a tool in her hand.

—- just as she declared, the choker was unlocked in 30 minutes.
She then casually threw out the choker

“Lute-kun, signal Chrisse-chan to withdraw.”
“Leave it to me.”

Snow from the wagon stretch out her hand high.
A flashy bright magic explosion shot upward.

Around one hour later.
Gigi and the other, moved quickly toward the location of the magic prevention collar.
But, there they found only the magic prevention collar laying on the road.

They had let madam slip away.

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The place we arrived in, is the residence of a magic stone dealer to whom Meiya is friendly with.
Coming back from the night battle, ojou-sama met her mother first time in a few months.

“…Tsu!”

Ojou-sama still in her field uniform, leapt straight for her mother’s chest after not having seen her for a long time.
Madam gently stroked her head.

“Thank you Chrisse. For saving mother.”
[Without everyone’s help, I can do nothing by myself.]

She wrote on the magic mini-blackboard.

“That’s right, isn’t it. Everyone, as representative of the Vlad house, I once again give you my thanks.”

Madam lowered her head to us, me, Snow and Meiya, in that place.

“Madam, as a butler of the Vlad house, it was only the natural thing to do..”
“In that case, then the fact that our family was able to meet with Lute was really a godsend.”

“I have sent out word to Merry-san and the others about Madam’s safe extrication, but meeting with them would have to wait until after the reconciliation. It’s to prevent the enemy from finding out your whereabouts and coming to attack and abduct you and Ojousama again.”

The enemy is detestable, but beyond the fact that there are those watching the family feud from the side, we can’t afford to kill them all.
Now that there are no hostages on their side, they no longer had any hands to play.
After showing our power to deter them, we should find out Master’s whereabouts, and then once again we entrust our self to Master.

“It’s so. Although, what is the plan from here on? As I am safe now, my husband will be able to use all his power, but… I heard that he was sold as a slave to somewhere. We presently don’t have the power to keep those people in check.”
[Mother, do you know where father has been sold to?]

“No, I’m sorry, I’m a powerless mother.”
[That’s not true! But I wonder if father is okay…]
“You don’t need to worry about that. Its him after all, even if he receive a body blow from a dragon, there won’t be even a single scratch on him.”

Uwaa—, it’s so easy to imagine him to do that.

To change the atmosphere I spoke out.

“Since we have ojousama as a deterrent there won’t be any problems. Which is why I was thinking I’d like to open up negotiations with the enemy soon.”
“Chrisse?”
“Yes. She is our deterrent, our trump card.”

Lute turned to ojou-sama.

“By the way ojou-sama, were there any problems with the sniper rifle you tried today?”
[The bullet’s powder still felt a bit weak. The trigger weight was also a little bit on the soft side and the bullets were a bit off from what I imagined, so please make the adjustments.]
“Guh, ce… certainly.”

Though I only worked on it for a short time, I did my best to complete the sniper rifle, but Ojousama still found things to criticize about it.

“I understand. Then I’ll make the adjustments until the day of the reconciliation. For now, please assume you will be using the current gun for the performance.”
[Okay.]

Meiya interrupted.

“It’s about time for sunrise soon. Shall I prepare a hot bath or some food?”
“I’ll take you up on your offer then. Please prepare a bath. It’s been awhile since I had one with my daughter, you don’t mind do you, Chrisse?”
[Yes, mother.]

While smiling ojou-sama lifted up her mini board.

Allowing the mother-daughter pair to bond after their long separation, we took the tactful approach and left the room.

Chapter 048 – Reconciliation

About half a month after we rescued Madam.
Chrisse-ojousama and Madam's meeting place with the Vampire Clan has been decided.

The location is Chrisse-ojousama best friend's residence, Karen Bishop from centaur race.
It would take place in the training ground.

The training ground is 3 soccer fields wide.
As expected of weapon dealers.
Usually this place is used as a training ground for the private armies, but right now nothing is here.

On the training ground 4 simple chairs are set on opposing sides.
In front of the chief seat, a wooden table is placed.
On it was an unfamiliar scale, standing there conspicuously.

The seat on our side are occupied by Ojou-sama and Madam, on their back me, Merry-san and Mercè-san lined up.

At the opposing side the fat Vampire clan's patriarch Pylkkänen Vlad and the skinny Ravino sat there, on their backs Gigi-san and 2 others are standing there.
On the chief seat, Karen sat there, as a witness and moderator.

Normally, this kind of discussion would happen indoors.
But, on Vlad count house's suggestion, this time it will be held on an open ground.

The weather is cloudy as usual, but there is no wind and it is quite warm.
It seems that having a discussion outside won't have any unexpected drawback.

In the silence, Karen looked around, working as a moderator.

“Now, let begin the discussion between Vampire houses from the Vampire race. I karen from the horse clan will bear witness. in the case of not following the rules and violence is used, the party involved will be antagonized by the horse clan.”

In this regard, the Horse Clan is the top class fighting force.
There’s probably no one thinking of making the Horse Clan as enemies.

Pylkkänen the chief of Vampire clan raised his hand.

“And what if the Horse Family deliberately sides with the Vlad House in this discussion, hmm?”
“In the name of the horse clan i swear, absolute fairness will be assured. In the case of circumstances, compensation can be requested. And to prevent such cases to happen i’ve brought this [Scales of Truth.]”

[Scales of Truth.]

A Magic Tool.
There are feathers on both ends of the scale. One is white, one is black.
It is then balanced on the palm of the hand, it will judge the fairness of the person in charge, now that Karen had declared, if she supported Ojou-sama side, the white feather will sink. The opposite also hold true, if she supported the Vampire Clan, the black wing will sink. Other than that, the feathers won’t move.
It seems it was used a lot in the court.

“Can we confirm it?”
“Yes, certainly.”
“Oi, Ravino!”
“Yes, elder brother.”

The two men rise, checking whether or not the [Scales of Truth] was the real thing.

Looking at the backside, touching the wings, also confirming that magic are properly contained by holding it in the palm of the hand.
Satisfied, they returned to their seats.

“People of the Vlad House, have you confirmed?”
“We do not see any problems with it.”

Madam shook her head to accept.

“If so, we will begin to open this meeting.”

Karen holds the Scales of Truth on top of her palm.

“I Karen Horse hereby will disregard my personal feeling and will conduct this meeting in complete fairness.”

The Scale of truth glows. Of course the equilibrium remain undisturbed.
With this the preparation are complete.

The one who spoke first was Vampire patriarch, Pylkkänen Vlad.

“We the Vampire Clan’s patriarch, cannot forgive the night raid that happened in our main Vlad house half a month ago! Right now I want to have justice for our house guards! We are no demon, but we won’t allow the Vampire Clan to be made fun of, that’s why we demand you to hand over Seras Gate Vlad and Chrisse Gate Vlad to us unconditionally. If our demand is fulfilled, we will overlook this incident!”
“Yeah, as expected for elder brother!”

Pylkkänen sat back on his chair, acting like a messenger of justice.
As usual Ravino, the second son, acts servile.

Madam rejected their demand.

“We never acknowledge people like you to become the head of Vlad Clan. You are just a thief who stole the seat and taking hostage…che-!”
“Fun! That was just an unfortunate accident. To begin with, a dispute around family inheritance is nothing uncommon for demon clans, on contrary it’s quite a common occurrence even among other clans. There should be no resentment for it.”

Pylkkänen composure hasn't faltered even if he's the perpetrator for taking hostages.
Such a shameless person.

Furthermore Pylkkänen pressed for an answer.

"First, the count of your family is unfortunately being enslaved and currently missing. For that reason, we assume the role as the head of the family. And instead of being grateful, you spoke ill of us."

"…..If that's the case, then there will be no problem. I will let my daughter Chrisse Gate Vlad to take the role."

Even Pylkkänen was shocked by that statement.
He hurled insults, spittle flying out from his mouth.

"Impossible! The family head isn't even here, and you just make a decisions as you please!? Furthermore she's not even a magician, that incompetent daughter! A kid like that's doesn't deserve becoming the head of the Vlad clan!"

This time it's Madam turn to attack.

"The head of the house is currently missing. That's why I've decided to make my daughter into the head. Even if my husband is here, I doubt he'll have any objection. Indeed she is still 12, and there is still time before she will grow into an adult at the age of 15. Considering the case, I will assume the role as a temporary head."

Vampire clan representative, Pylkkänen and second son Ravino became so red that they turn blue.
Their argument is turned and used against them.
Like a boomerang that return and stuck on the thrower body.

Madam pressed on.

"As you said, my daughter probably doesn't have any magical talent, but she got talent to take the role as the head of the family."

“E, even a kid can say such a thing! Show us a proof, or we can’t accept it! Evidence!”

Pylkkänen snapped like a lowly dog at a point he can finally make an objection to.
He did so not knowing that the bait contained deadly poison.

“Then we’ll give you your proof. Karen-san, we would like to demonstrate a certain magic tool as proof, may we?”
“I don’t mind. Pylkkänen-sama, do you have any problem with it?”

Of course Pylkkänen doesn’t have any reason to object.
Receiving his consent, Karen gave out permission.

At her signal, I temporarily left my position, to get that certain “magical tool”

From Karen’s residence, a metal case was carefully being carried.
Moreover Karen’s servants, had implanted a wooden doll that is fully equipped with armours approximately 300 meter away.

“”?””

Vampire Clan’s patriarch and second son tilted their heads.
Remembering what happened at that night raid, Gigi and company break into a cold sweat.

Used to it, Ojou-sama brought out the M700P.
Loading the magazine, the bolt is cocked.
There is no scope.

Ojou-sama moved away from her seat.
She improved her capability with body strengthening technique.
In offhand shooting stance, aiming approximately 300 meter away at the armoured doll.
Supporting the barrel with her left hand, she touch the trigger with her right hand.
BANG!

A bullet shot out when the trigger is pressed.

Expertly Ojou-sama recock the bolt and a cartridge was ejected.

BANG!

The breastplate was penetrated.

Another cartridge was ejected.

BANG!

At the base, the left leg was blown away.

Another cartridge was ejected.

BANG!

Next, the left arm was blown away at its joint.

BANG!

Lasty, between the slit of the face mask, the right eye was pierced, then the head flew.

Both brothers of the Vampire clan were dumbfounded.

Instead of Ojou-sama, I left a remark.

“Karen-sama, due to a personal reasons Ojou-sama cannot speak. That attack— is there any problem if I’m the one who explains the firing?”
“Vampire Clan’s patriarch, is there any problem?”

Karen seeks permission.
They nod their head.

I once again clears my throat, then begun to explain.

“I’m Lute, a human race butler of the Vlad house. Being presumptuous, I will begun explanation on the magic tool that you had just witness.”

Everyone gathered their gaze to me.

“The magic tool that Ojou-sama used is called, sniper rifle ‘M700P’. similarly…”

From my pocket I pulled out and shown a ‘7.62mm x 51 NATO bullet’.
The size was about 1.5 times an AA battery.

“From this ammunition a bullet will shoot out. The effective shooting distance is approximately 1.5 kilometer. Even without body strengthening, just like before Ojou-sama could within 1km shoot the head, leg, arm, chest or anywhere she likes. Furthermore all sort of special bullets can be inserted into the ammunition, for example something like a silver bullet.”

In otherwords, within 1km, no matter what are they doing, maybe on a stroll or eating or shopping or defecating or bathing or nursing, one could be assassinated without any magical trace.
In actuality the actual practical effective shooting distance was around 900 meter, but that amount of bluff should be forgiven in a negotiation.

“Moreover, Ojou-sama’s skills are top-notch. Day or night doesn’t matter to her. In fact, she’s even better at night.”

Madam takes over the speech.

“If I am not mistaken, the two of you had a cute daughter and son, correct? Also, from (the wives) relatives a niece as well.”
[“!?”]

Even though it’s not hot, the Vampire Clan’s patriarch and second son was drenched in sweat.
If this indirect threat was only a wordplay, it could be easily dismissed.
However, they were right now being presented with an unpleasant performance.

Would they be able to keep their vigilance, constantly in fear of sniper attacks from 1 km in all directions?
And not only for their own selves, at that.
Their daughters, sons, wives, nieces, and relatives too!

It's impossible.
It's unrealistic.
Most of all, nothing exhausts one's mind and body like the constant fear of death.

Madam declared her ultimatum.

"We demand of you one thing only. Never again lay your hands on our Vlad's Count house. In case you break your promise you and every single person who is important to you will experience misfortunes."

The Vampire clan's patriarch and second son instantly raised a white flag. Sparing not even a single second.

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After the meeting, the Vampire Clan patriarch and second son left Gigi and the others behind, returning home as if they were running away.

They begin to acquire a lot of debt, that's why they tried to acquire the count's house. Allured by the prospect of having count's house property and business, they loaned even more money.

Pylkkänen and co trying to get out of the debt by using the money from the count's house, but they failed. Buried by a hole that they created, probably they are going bankrupt.
After that, whatever may happen to them will have nothing to do with us.

The other two guards besides Gigi seemed to be thinking "Whaaatever." and left the Horse House.

Only Gigi-san stayed behind.

I once again ask about what happen half month ago.

“Gigi-san……. Why did you betray the Vlad’s house?”
“—I, was born in a certain mountain headquarter in the Beast Continent and my parents are both bandits.”

Gigi-san slowly revealed his past.

But, the bandit’s master was subjugated by the adventurer. At that time, both my parents and friends died. Of course Master did not personally kill them, nor did he ever intend to kill them.
They lost their lives as the result of the battle.

Gigi-san was captured by public order corps’s soldier.
He’s still a child at that time, he was sold as a slave.

Luckily, he had talent as a magician, so he didnt recieve a cruel treatment.
A chance to grow his magic talent then appeared.
When his current master died, and his relative sold Gigi-san.

The one who bought him after he was sold to the Slaver was Count Dan Gate Vlad.
With his skill as a magician, his obedience from his time with his previous master was tested.

When Gigi-san met Master, he realize that he was the adventurer’s leader.
Maa, it’s troublesome that there are 2-3 people like Master…..

Even with a surprise attack, he realized that it was impossible to attack from the front.
So Gigi-san waited for an opportunity to get his revenge.

“I understand that, my parents and friends from the brigade at that time was trash, but they are still my family. My family died protecting me,….. and yet even with the enemy right in front of my eyes, I can’t do anything for my dead comrades. That’s why, I——”

For that reason he colluded with the Vampire clan's patriarch and second brother — to kidnap Madam.

There Gigi-san sat crosslegged.

"… This was the reason I betrayed you, the truth of the matter. Now boil me or put me to the flames or what have you."

He relaxed his body and showed no resistance.
With a dangerous mood hanging in the air, Madam stepped/closer.

"Tsu….."

The well-being of Master is still not known.
Thanks to Gigi-san, none of the maids of the Vlad House had been assaulted by men, nor had there been any deaths, but having said that, the losses were huge.
To me a mere servant, I have no right to stop Madam.

While my head is down a warm hand is placed on my arm.
When I looked up, I found that Madam was giving me a comforting smile.

"Gigi, I will tell you your punishment. For betraying the Vlad's house… You will search for my husband Count Dan. Then apologize to the people, who are involved in this incident. And for the last punishment, I'll let my husband decide. That's all."
"……Madam?"

As expected Gigi-san was shocked by the light punishment he received.

"I have betrayed Madam, by cutting confining and cutting Madam with a silver knife! And yet Madam didn't seek revenge… impossible! If commanded i would even kill myself!"

Gigi-san the accused raised an angry voice.
But Madam ignored it nonchalantly.

"Certainly, betraying the Vlad house is a crime. But Master knew that you are the captured bandit's children from the very beginning. The likelihood

of being betrayed had already been considered when hiring you."
"!?"

At that revelation Gigi-san made a look of pure astonishment.

"And yet before I knew it above all else i cared about the Vlad's house, and my husband and I became careless. So considering it was really our mistake, I wanted to entrust it to my husband."

Gigi-san loved the Vlad Family and thought of its interests as much as Merry-san, Mercè-san, or any of the other servants. Enough that I could tell, even with his usual taciturn unsociability.

Had that not been the case, he would not have said such loyal words as "The punishment you gave me is too soft" not "If you so order, I will take my own life".
That's why Master had completely let his guard down.

Gigi-san's wish for vengeance was probably the real thing.
But because of the the long years he had spent with them, feelings of love for Master, Madam, Ojou-sama, and the servants had budded.
But the wish for vengeance that he held for many years in his heart——and his decision that he would "avenge [his] parents" as well, were probably not things that he could wash over.

It was because of Gigi-san that Ojou-sama and I were able to escape the castle as he was the one who said to not participate in the battle as I needed to protect Ojou-sama.
Was the fact that Master escaped with his life not also in large part due to Gigi-san working behind the scenes?
That no deaths had happened this time might also have been because Gigi-san wavered between his vengeance and loyalty.

Madam gave Gigi-san a cold look.

"Do you think suicide will absolve you? You are the Vlad's chief guard, please act in a way to not shame that title. My husband has yet to be found, isn't that right Gigi?"
"…I am unworthy of being the House of Vlad's chief guard. So I will humbly atone for my sins and on my life to find your husband."

Gigi-san with his posture upright, his fists firmly planted in the ground, and his head lowered.
Although no rain was falling, the drops that did indeed fall to the floor were undoubtedly real.

But why Gigi-san, why did you not implement your plan earlier?
If you had acted swiftly Gigi-san, Ojou-sama would have never had the opportunity to escape the castle.

If I ran together with Ojou-sama, expecting it, it's highly probable that Pylkkänen and co will take us down. Coming back with a few people holding guns is unexpected, but Ojou-sama existence was the most pivotal for winning. It would probably have been possible to strike a deal and move Karen's family as well.

Could it be….. Gigi-san's plan from the start was to fail and die?

But now it would be rather boorish to seek the truth of the matter.
I kept silent and resigned my conclusion to the depths of my mind.

Thus Volume 2, Raid on the House of Vlad, has drawn to a conclusion; except for the whereabouts of the Count.

Chapter 049 – Resolve

The night after the meeting..
In the Vlad house's banquet hall that was used to hold Karen's birthday party, a buffet was held in celebration.
Gigi-san as expected did not participate.
After finishing apologizing to all the people he caused trouble for this time, it would seem he intended to head off on a trip to look for the Master.

The main attendees are me, Snow, Chrisse-ojousama, Madam, and Meiya.
Then there is the person in charge of the meeting, Ojousama's close friend, the Centaur Karen, also her other close friends, the three-eyed Barnie, and the Lamia Muir.
The head butler Merry-san, the head maid Mercè-san and the other servants shouted up cheers at the signal of the toast.

Tonight was an unrestricted binge to celebrate the victory of House Vlad.
The maids were split into groups making the food and going around bringing drinks, and participating in the party in shifts.

I am a butler's apprentice, but due to my achievements I've been exempt from work for tonight.
However, even though the other servants still had shifts and were working, having been exempted from work, I stood in a shady corner at the back.

But in spite of that it seems I still stand out, as I had been caught by others as they were taking their shifts.
The first one was Merry-san the head butler.

"Truly, the punishment Gigi received from the Madam is far too light. Normally it is reasonable if someone committed treason that they be immediately executed. Don't you think so too Lute? meeh."
"I guess, however the decision was made by Madam."
"Naturally. It is thanks to Gigi that we got to know the information that Master was sold to the Demon Continent as a slave. I think that part brought about some kindness, meeh."

Though only complaints were uttered, he could not hide the relief in his voice.
After all is said and done, Merry-san's and Gigi-san's relationship is lengthy.

"At Madam's request, from tomorrow on I will train you from scratch on how to be like Gigi, baa~"

Merry-san is the type to get carried away once he begins to lecture.
I brought my hands together in front of my chest and prayed for Gigi-san.

During our conversation Snow appears.
Snow's appearance frees me from Merry-san's ramble.

"Good work. Snow, If you weren't there we wouldn't have gotten to where we are so well. Thank you."
"Uun, I am glad I was able to assist you Lute."

"That's a relief to hear you say so. What are you going to do now, Snow? Are you going back to the Fairy Human Continent Magic School?"
"I told you earlier didn't I? I became a A- ranked Magician as well as a special student; I can graduate without even attending to school. So that way, I can always stay by Lute-kun's side."

Ah, that's right.
Snow became an A- magician so she could meet me as soon as possible.
Just I was relishing in Snow's greatness in more way than one, ojousama came along, pudding in hand.
Snow shows an interest in ojou-sama's pudding, the two get along well and head towards a table.

Now it's Meiya's turn to make an appearance.

"You too Meiya, thanks alot. Without your help, surely we were unable to save madam and vlad house. Really thank you."
"Lute-sama please! Please raise your face! First of all I am Lute's foremost disciple, It is a matter of course to assist you."

Meiya responds in her usual tone.
Now from her she posed to me the same question I did to Snow.

“Lute-sama, what are you going to do after this?”
“As it is as I am a slave, I will stay as a butler’s apprentice in the Vlad House and remain ojou’s blood bag.”
“If that is the case I will stay as well!”
“Whatt!?”
“It is natural for your best disciple to remain at your side!”

Rather than deciding to live here without permission…. I believe there is no way you can selfishly decided on such state of things in this residence. After all, there is far too much focus on her being my foremost disciple.

Madam who walked past just as this was being discussed joined in the conversation.

“Meiya-san is Vlad House’s saviour, it’s fine with me for her to stay here forever. The same goes for Lute.”
“Yes ma’am.”
“Also as a reward, I release you from slavery. Now you are free.”
“Ah, Madam!? But your husband is still in the Demon Continent. Why… when the situation is so dire?”

Madam stroked my head to reassure me.

“It is fine. My husband is not one to die easily. Lute should know that best with as many time as you two have dueled.”

The Count could certainly win even surrounded by dragons, doing so with a laugh.

“And besides compared to Lute, I know that muscle head better. Of course Gigi will also go on a journey to search for my husband.”

Set a thief to catch a thief—so the saying goes.

Madam connects the phrase with “That’s why ”.

“After being released from slavery, I don’t mind if you decide either to stay here and continue serving as a butler or chasing your dream to create an 『army corps legion to save people』.”

“Madam…. my dream… how?”
“Fufufu, because Snow-san told me. I think it is a rather good dream. So what will you do?”

“…….Please give me some time to think about it.”
“Yes, I do not mind. Well then, Meiya-san I wonder if you would let me hear your story too. Lute, the procedure for releasing you from slavery will be done tomorrow.”
“Eh, wait a… ! I as Lute-sama number one disciple must always be at his service!”

Meiya’s arm was captured and dragged by madam.
Maybe she did that, so that i could think for my decision without outside disturbance.

Thanks to that, I could ponder in tranquility.

‘I wonder why i didn’t immediately chose to fulfill my dream to create an army legion that help troubled people right after i was released as a slave?’

The reason was obvious.
I’m worried about Chrisse-ojousama.

She regained her confidence, but she is still weak to loneliness. That’s why, i believe that i need to stay by her side.

However, someday she will become the head of vlad house and marry another man. Until then will i continue to protect her?
That’s unrealistic. There are things I want to do. I can’t stay at this house until it happen. But….

Like a spiraling darkness, rumination swept over my mind.
While I’m lost in such contemplation, ojou-sama’s three best friends arrive.

“Oh, you are here. Why is the star hiding at the corner?” said Karen Bishop from Centaur race.
“This time I’m the only one who can’t do anything. I’m sorry”, says the three-eyed Barnie Bloomfield.
“If you say that, all I did was contact merry-san and the others.” said Muir Head from Lamia race.

“No, it isn’t just this incident that all of you have helped with, but I’ve been in your care for a great many things, so I really am gratefuly. Truly, thank you very much.”

Lamia Muir came to give me her thanks with a bittersweet smile.

“Well, I’m glad that you think that way, but… Ah, by the way, I know that you’ve been freed from slavery, but what is it that you intend on doing from now on?”
“…..You heard that?”

“I did, sorry. Though I did not mean to overhear.”

Barnie of the three-eyed triple apologized profusely.
I smiled in response and said that there wasn’t a problem.

“It’s okay. It’s not like it’s something unpleasant for others to hear, after all.”
“You say it’s not unpleasant to hear, but… Lute might quit being a butler. Does Chrisse know about it?”
“….. No.”

When I said that out, the Karen’s voice became heavy.

“Whoa, Karen.”
“…I know, Muir. Sorry Lute, it was a nasty question. We didn’t come here to condemn you, but rather to pass on a message.”
“Message?”
“Aah, It is from Chrisse. It seems she wants you to come to her room.”

Thinking about what she said, i looked inside the room.
Certainly I cannot find ojou-sama.
Not so long ago, she supposedly was eating pudding and mille crepe with Snow. Just when did she….

“Thank you very much. Now then, if you’ll excuse me, I shall go to meet ojousama.”

To the three, I lower my head and exit the hall.
On the way I meet the head maid Merry-san informing her I was headed to ojou-sama's room.

She flashed me a sweet smile.

Said "Good luck Lute", and left..

Luck with what?

I turn the other way and continue down the familiar corridor. Finally arriving at Ojou-sama's door.

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After knocking, i place my hand on the door.
After a few months, it was the nostalgic Ojou-sama room.
When rescuing madam, there was no time to visit this room.

The room was dark.
Only starlights pass through the window.

"Ojou-sama, it's Lute. I'm here to deliver a massage from Karen and the others."

Just like when we met for the first time, ojou-sama laid roundly on the bed covered with a blanket.

She was peeking through the miniboard with a cute red face.

“Ojou-sama?”
[Sit here please.]

She tapped the mini blackboard next to her.
Per her order, I sat on the bed.

Ojou-sama with a flop sat next to me, then looked up into my face.
Her eyes were wet and tears could drop at any time.

“…tsu!”

Without realizing, I was pushed down by Ojou-sama.

On her small lips, mine lays on the bottom.
It was an immature kiss, where teeths collided because she was little bit too forceful.

Gently, our lips separated.
Ojou-sama’s face redden, as blood rush to her head.

“O, ojou-sama!?”
“…you.”
“!?”

I hear her voice for the first time.
The shock from it was greater than the kiss.
Ojousama gazed straight at me as she confessed.

“Lu, Lute….. Onii-chan, I like, you.”

These are the first words I have ever heard from Ojou-sama.

She struggled desperately to squeeze out her words in an attempt to adequately express her feelings.

“I love… you. Make Chrisse….. your wife please.”

Stuttering because she hasn’t spoken for a long time, but her passionate feelings reached me.

With her faltering voice, she continued to speak.
About how she heard from Snow about my dream——『I want to help those looking for help』. And how predicting that I would leave one day, she didn't want to part from me, and realised that she wanted to stay by my side forever.
About how she wanted to stay by my side, and in the same way that she was saved by me, she too wanted to save other people,

About how she loved me, didn't want to part from me, and wanted to follow me to the end of the world.

Although she faltered, Chrisse-Ojousama gave it her all to convey that to me.
Pitiful like a small child, she was really lovable.
My chest gradually grew hot.
However, I already have Snow——
Had the orders in which I met them been different, I wonder how my reply would have been.

I placed my hand on Ojousama's shoulder, and stood up.
Sitting down once more, I corrected my posture.

"I'm really happy that you feel that way, Ojousama. However… I have Snow as my fiancée. I cannot betray her."
"Lut, e-Oniich, an, I li… ke, you. I love, you. I'll try, my best, with the rif, le. So… please,, don't leave … me"
"…!"

That's foul play.
There's no way that I could abandon Ojousama.

Thanks to her, I was picked up by the Vlad House.
Had things gone badly, I might have been sold as a male prostitute, or sent to work in a mine until I died.
And moreover, she might become depressed and hole up in her room again. In that room that even the sunlight couldn't enter. Ojousama would once again stop moving forward, and spend a long time by herself.

Just having that scene float through my mind made my heart feel like it was being blended to shreds.
What's more, just imagining another man's hands run over her limbs was

enough to make me feel violently ill.
I want to protect her.
I want her to be mine.

Chrisse Gate Vlad is adorable…-!

But still! Even still——!
I can't betray Snow!

"I like you too, Ojousama. I love you. However… I also love Snow. It is… impossible for me, to betray her."
"-…."

Ojousama's shoulders dropped sadly.
She sluggishly reached her hand out for her mini-blackboard.

[As expected, I could not win against Snow-Oneechan.]
"…I'm sorry. But, had the order in which I met you two been the other way around, I think the result would have been different."
[I understand… Then, I will also give my all to support you, as your second wife, Oniichan.]
"Yeah. You'll have to give your all as my second wife… Huh?"

[Snow-Oneechan and I made a promise. If I wasn't able to become the first wife, then I would marry Oniichan as the second wife.]
"HUH!? When was this?"
[Our late-night meeting at Meiya-san's house.]

Meiya, night, night meeting… *That* time!?
Ojousama hiding bashfully behind Snow wasn't because she heard about my embarrassing past!?

As I was recalling that day, with good timing, Snow came along into the room.

"Chrisse-chan, are you finished talking?"
[Yes. I could not win against you, Snow-Oneechan. However, I want to support Oniichan from now on as his second wife.]
"Ehehehe, I believed in you, Lute-kun. As you'd expect, the bonds between childhood friends who've been together since they were born are quite

strong, huh? But you don't have to worry, Chrisse-chan. Lute-kun is definitely the type of person who'll love us equally without caring about first or second, after all."
[All right! I will try my best as well, to support Oniichan with you, Snow-Oneechan!]
"Mn! From now on, let's try our best together."

The two of them easily consented to bigamy.
Certainly, in this world and age, polygamy and the like isn't really uncommon.
It's cultural differences…

"W-, Wait! Wait a moment! Ojousama is already the head of the Vlad House! Can you even marry into somebody else's family?"
『There are no problems. The vampire race is a long-lived race, so as the family head on paper, I can give birth to a successor, and have that child inherit the position instead. That's why there isn't a problem with marrying you, Oniichan. Okaasama has already approved.』

SUGOI, the prep has already been dealt with?

And so, Ojousama and Snow began to talk amicably.
It seems that the two of them are deciding on the timetable and rules for our newlywed life.
Since the two of them seem to be having fun, it would be tasteless for me to say anything more.

And moreover, Ojousama——now my wife, Chrisse, was truly happy. I love her too after all, and I cherish her. She gets along with Snow, too.

And so I was able to gain a brilliant sniper as my second wife.

Gun-Ota

- Volume 4 -

Chapter 050 – New Equipment

Lute, age 14
Equipment : S&W M10 4 inch (revolver)
: AK-47 (assault rifle)

Snow, age 14
A-minus ranked magician
Equipment : S&W M10 2-inch (revolver)

Chrisse, age 13
Equipment : M700P (sniper rifle)

A few days after the resolution of the incident.
I handed over a bracelet to Chrisse and formally announced to everyone about us becoming a couple.
Unlike my previous world, we don't swear our love in a church, but we gather everyone and tell them of our marriage and exchange wedding vows.
Then we—Snow, Chrisse and I, and my number one disciple Meiya, stayed in the Vlad estate. (I remade Snow's bracelet I had lost and likewise exchanged formal wedding vows.)

"Then what are we going to do now?"

We were in Ojou-sama's—now my wife Chrisse's room, having a tea party while discussing what our plans would be from now on.

Yesterday we talked while we had a tea party in the courtyard, but Mercè-san, Merry-san and the other servants came along and half-teasingly called me [Young Master] [Young Master] again and again, so I became embarrassed and today we're having it in Chrisse's room.

The first thing we brought up in conversation was Snow's magic school attendance, but according to the person herself, [I'm already ranked A-minus, so it'll be alright even if I didn't come back. I've already qualified for graduation without going to class.]

On the school's side, they wanted Snow to graduate from the Fairy Human Continent magic school at all costs for the sake of their prestige. It seemed she was allowed to do this for that reason.

Therefore, I proposed we go to the North Continent to look for clues to find Snow's parents.
Back when we were in the orphanage, she told me she dreamed of finding her parents and living together with them.
However, her reaction was slow.

"Of course I'm happy you'd go there with me… but as we are now it'd be a bit hard if we traveled there."

It seemed as soon as she had joined the magic school, she had immediately examined all sorts of information regarding both the [North Continent] and the [White Wolf Tribe] in order to find her parents.

The North Continent was located where the number [12] was on a clock.
It was the continent where it snowed all year round.

The White Wolf Tribe was a minority living in the heartland of that continent.
But there were also dangerous monsters living in the continent's heartland.
For example, there are the White Dragons and the Giants.

White Dragons, as the name implied, spit out snowstorms from their mouths at their enemies.

"These *Giants*, what are they? Couldn't they be monsters originating from enlarged humans?"

Something like fighting while yelling [Exterminate!]
Snow shook her head.

“Not that, they’re more like huge walking stone statues. They form groups and are always on the move. Occasionally, one or two would stray from the group and attack human settlements. They’re dangerous monsters that equal Dragons.”
“Huge walking stone statues, huh? That’ll be difficult to take down with an AK-47.”
[And with a sniper rifle, as well.]

Chrisse voiced her agreement on the mini blackboard.

The White Wolf tribe seemed to live by weaving their way around those dangerous monsters.
Unless we prepare weapons which could stand against those monsters, we’d be annihilated before we could find them .

What’s more, we’re going to form a [Legion] in the future.
In order to become Level V adventurers, we need to take down one or more Dragons or Giants.

It’s still a long way off, but we should plan some countermeasures while we’re at it.
There were weapons I postponed development on since they didn’t get much use during the vampire incident and also there were things I felt I needed to make. Since I’m going to be fighting Dragons and Giants, I think further weapons development is necessary.

“In that case, why don’t we go back to my workshop?”

Hearing what Meiya proposed, everyone there, Snow, Chrisse, and I, looked at each other.
Seeing everyone thought it was a good idea, she continued.

“My workshop has plenty of tools and materials, you can do research and development as you like there. There’s also an Adventurer’s’ Guild there since the Dragon Continent is a famous dungeon paradise of the world! There’s also a wide range of job requests there.”
“……Well, that *is* an option.”

We’re already familiar with Meiya’s workshop.
As thanks for the Vampire incident, we could also resume Meiya’s studies.

At the same time we could also register Snow and Chrisse as adventurers. We'd level up together, and eventually become level V or level IV.

That way, we could fulfill the conditions for setting up a Legion: one level V and two level IV adventurers.
I suppose I could call it reasonable.

"……. All right. We should return to the Dragon Continent once more like Meiya says, then. I've got lots of things I wanted to build, too. Will you two be okay with this?"
"Where Lute-kun goes, is where I'll go."
[As a wife, I'll stay by Lute-oniichan's side, too.]

With this our next destination was decided.

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Once we decided on a course of action we moved quickly.
A few days later, we bid everyone in the Vlad estate farewell and set off.

Gigi-san already went off on his trip, so it was a little regrettable we couldn't say goodbye to him.

Before we left the Demon Continent, I sent Elle-sensei a letter.

I wrote about my meeting with Snow, my marriage with Chrisse, my release from slavery, and the continuation of my adventures in the Dragon Continent.

About a month later we returned to Meiya's estate.
We went by coach and then by ship.
Arriving at Meiya's estate, the first thing we did was have a bath, a meal, and some sleep—in order to rest from our travel fatigue we spent three days lazing around.

The morning of the fourth day.
I took Meiya and walked into her workshop.

Since I had come to the Dragon Continent I've been wearingDragon Kungfu, which were traditional Dragon Continent clothes for men.
Snow and Chrisse also wore Dragon Dresses.

"Lute-sama, what kind of handgun shall we be making this time?"
"We're not going to be making handguns or weapons today. I was thinking we're going to put together some personal equipment."
"Not weapons but personal equipment? Will it be armor or something?"

Meiya tilted her head in question.
Even though I said personal equipment other than weapons, it seemed she still didn't get it.
I showed her the memo I had prepared beforehand and explained.

This was also one way I'm repaying Meiya for the Vampire incident.

"At the minimum, I thought I should make these."

- Combat Uniform
- Eye Protection Gear
- Helmet
- Backpacks

- Combat Protectors
- Combat Boots
- ALICE Clips
- Bulletproof Vests

“A, are you going to be making all of these?”
“That’s because they don’t need large-scale work like the M700P. I’ll explain what each one is and what they’re used for in turn.”
“Yes, please treat me well!”

Meiya’s eyes shined like a child being given a toy, then she took out a blank memo pad and a feather pen.
I explained each one in turn and in a way that made it easy for her to understand.

- Combat Uniform—Clothes worn during battle. The outside was designed for easy movement and was made from a robust material that breathed easily. For now I planned to make them with cotton. They were equipped with pockets in various places for storing lots of small accessories.
- Combat Protector—There were two purposes for it: [Protecting the knees and elbows] and [Mental effect of safety even if you moved around violently].
  In times when one needed to squat or lay prone, there was a possibility that a moment’s hesitation over getting a knee injury meant the difference between life and death. However, if one wore a set of protectors, the mental safety/practicality of not getting injured when overdoing things would be important in close combat situations.
- Helmet—The purpose of the helmet was to protect a Human’s most important organ: The brain. Making a helmet out of magic liquid metal

would make lighter and stronger helmets compared to making one out of needlessly thick iron.

- Eye Protection Gear—Goggles. There were lots of things which could damage the eyes in combat. Dust carried by the wind, spent cartridges ejected by allies, wood or stone fragments scattered about by bullets. With magic, there would also be fragments scattered by blasts. If these hit one's eye then combat power would decrease. Therefore eye protection was necessary. The problem was what the glass parts were to be made of. Of course we couldn't use this world's glass. It wasn't strong enough. It would conversely increase the risk of damage.
- Backpack—During the vampire incident, the clay to stop one of the functions of the magic prevention collar and the softball-sized smoke grenade was put in a bag. However, since there was no time I made one which was barely suitable for the job. This time I'll be making one foremergencies in advance.

  The total weight of the equipment [shouldn't exceed a third of a soldier's body weight].

  Fighting strength of a tired soldier drops significantly. I thought rather than giving soldiers all they could bear to carry, it was better to set a standard.

  I also thought I shouldn't stuff 20 kg of baggage into one large bag, but instead disperse the weight using smaller bags linked together to make it easier to carry. Pack together three 5 kg bags and hang two 2.5 kg bags from each of them.
- Combat Boots—During the vampire incident I used ones with soles made of soft materials to reduce the sound of footsteps, but the combat boots I'll make this time are going to be for field use. However,

there's no rubber in this alternate world. I've never seen any. Therefore I'll be attaching metal rivets to the shoe soles.

- Metal rivets are useful as an anti-skid mechanism but the downside was the temperature of the ground would be easily transmitted to the foot, in cold regions heat easily flows out, causing frostbite. Tentatively, I'll put a sheet of monster skin between two plates made from magic liquid metal. This way cold and heat won't go through and one could safely step on metal pieces. The tip of the toes would also be fitted with metal to make the boots safe.
- ALICE Clip—[Sliding metal clips] attached to pistol belts. The advantage of ALICE clips was that one can attach them wherever one likes along the belt. The mechanism wasn't complicated, either. However, if used this way the trousers would slide down from the weight of the equipment, so it should be supported using suspenders. The combination of a [Pistol Belt] and [Suspenders] was called a [Belt Kit].
- Bulletproof Vest—Protects against piercing by soft point bullets favored by police or VIP guards. However, there was no chance of us getting hit by a bullet in this world. Bulletproof vests can't defend against stabs from arrows or the like. For that reason, I planned to make leather vests using this world's materials as a substitution. Ideally I'd like something which could defend against sword, arrow, and spear attacks.

"—Well I suppose I'm thinking about making some things like these. Weapons are important, but armor and a way to increase the number of magazines and the small stuff we carry are necessary to raise the odds of us surviving from now on."

"As expected from Lute-sama! I'll be learning from this!"

Meiya's expression brightened as she gleefully jotted everything down on the memo pad.
While I waited for her to finish writing things down I called out.

"Well then, I'll immediately begin making the [Combat Uniforms]."
"Yes! Your number one disciple shall help you out!"

"I'm sorry to disturb your work."

When Meiya had just gotten psyched, one of the estate's maids came along.

"A letter addressed to the Meiya estate just arrived."
"Good grief, who is it!? Barging in when I was just going to have some sweet time with Lute-sama!"

Meiya puffed her cheeks in anger and checked the sender of the letter.

—sigh
"Meiya?"

She faintly sighed.

"Leave it in my room."
"Understood."
"You don't need to read it first?"

"It doesn't matter! It's a letter from my childhood friend. Anyway, my time together with Lute-sama is more important than anything!"

She returned to her cheerful self as if ignoring her previous sigh.
Meiya cut the chatter about the letter with a smile.

Chapter 051 – New Life

I've been working on [Combat Protectors] with Meiya all morning.
I also spent some time accompanying her as she practiced assembling handguns.

She has been earnestly investing her time after discovering the method for producing iron plates with my help. In order for her to master it, she has been learning through the usage of her body by touching, licking, sniffing the odor, punching it to feel the hardness, nibbling it, and even pressing it to her cheeks to feel the harsh coldness of it.

In addition, she would draw it onto several sheets of paper and carry those with her to sleep, like a lover.

…… I think there was a scene like this in Hu○ter×H○nter.
Although she has made an effort, I feel that she is still a little bit short on receiving a passing mark.

I'm indebted to her, so I'll cooperate with her as much as possible.

However, because this amount of effort wasn't enough even for the genius Meiya, conveying a mental image to magic liquid metal is probably considerably difficult for the people of this world. It seems that this would be difficult to teach to normal magicians.

After lunch, I took Snow and Chrisse to the Adventurers' Guild branch in the Dragon Continent.

The Adventurers' guild had mostly the same appearance as the one in the Fairy Human Continent.

It was a three story building the size of a gymnasium, Adventurer-like people continuously came and went from it.

“So this is the Adventurers’ Guild.”
[It’s big.]

As this is Snow and Chrisse’s first time, they became oddly emotional.
I thought it was curious too when I visited for the first time, so I understand their feelings.

I took the girls inside the building.
The system here was also the same, I took a ticket from the information lady and at the same time took a set of registration forms for Snow and Chrisse.
I also took the documents required for reissuing tags.

While we waited, we filled in the necessary information.
We finished writing right when our ticket number was called.

“Uooh!?”
“…… what is wrong?”

After confirming who was sitting at the private counter, I let out a shriek.
The receptionist who took care of my beginner registration four years ago in the Fairy Human Continent was there.

Even after four years, she still looked like she was in her early 20’s, and as befits one of the Demon Race, she had sheep-like horns protruding out of her head and a pair of bat-like wings on her back. She looks as good in her Adventurers’ Guild clothes as ever.

It seemed like she didn’t recognize me.
That’s a given.
Compared to four years ago, I have grown taller and also my face has changed.

“Do you remember me? I’m Lute, you helped me with registering as an adventurer four years ago in Grey, a Port Town of the Fairy Human Continent. The one who hunted 31 Garugaru.”
“-!? Lute-san! So you are still alive!”

The moment I said [31 garugaru], the receptionist remembered immediately and showed a surprised face.
As I thought, I was thought to be dead over there.

I once again told how I ended up being deceived by a fake adventurer and was sold to the Demon Continent.
And now I'm safe, released from slavery, and live freely.

Because she was a demon, she was relocated from the Fairy Human continent into the Demon continent.
She told me that she was worried when didn't return.
I apologized for making her worried because of my mistake.

"So this time I am requesting for the reissue of my adventurer's registration, and newly register my companions here."
"Certainly. I'll be taking these documents, then."

She took the documents and checked them.

"Adventurer re-registration for Lute-sama, and a new registration for the other 2… right?"

She stared at the documents.

"….errr sorry, it's written here that you 3 have all circled the married status?"
"That is not a mistake, I'm married to both of them."
"Yes! I'm Lute-kun's wife."
[I'm also Lute-oniichan's wife.]

Snow and Chrisse showed their left hands.
They also shake the bracelet, made by me with magic liquid metal, on their arms.
Of course I showed mine too.

Last time Snow and I were just engaged, so I did not circle the married status.

But now, I have already performed the wedding ceremony with Snow and Chrisse.

Even though it is called a wedding ceremony, we did not exchange vows of love in a church. We just publicly informed people that we are married. Together with Snow the three of us held the wedding ceremony in peace.

Madam did give me the money for the bracelets, but still, for marriage bracelets, I wanted to buy them myself.

Therefore I requested to buy Meiya's magic liquid metal with the money I had been saving.
To create bracelets for Chrisse and myself.

Compared to Snow's, the design is thinner and more delicate (reminiscent of the lost bracelet which I had with Snow).

To Snow & Chris, they were satisfied with these sort of marriage bracelets. However, I'm not convinced.
I decided to buy suitable marriage bracelets with a little more charm in the future, and give one to each of them.

When the receptionist *onee-san* looked at our wedding bracelets, she was more surprised than the time I had hunted 31 *GaruGaru.*

"N, no way! You're only 14 and 13 years-old! Sheesh, kids these days! *sigh*… that must be nice~, although this *onee-san* has a job like this, I have never had any fated meetings at all. There's no way we can lay our hands on adventurers—and office romance is also strictly forbidden. Just where do they think we're supposed to find love. My parents are also annoy, always saying things like marriage this and grandchildrens that……"
"I.. I see…"

The *onee-san* suddenly complained with a grumble.
Although I thought that she is the type who would be popular, it seems like I was wrong

However, as expected, she did not derail forever, and she expressed her business smile afterwards.

“Then, one silver coin for the initial registration, and five pieces of silver coins if you want to have a reissue, Do you have any problems with this so far? Originally, Reissuing requires an interview, but because Lute-sama seems to be the victim here, I’ll just end it with a stern warning. However, if a similar incident happens again, there’s the possibility that you will be judged as incompetent and won’t receieve another reissue, so please be careful.”
“I, I understand, I will be careful, no problem.”

The receptionist confirmed the documents when she heard my consent.

Chrisse and my documents were scanned.
Next, she paused during Snow’s document check.

“Magician A- Class !?”

She once again revealed a surprised voice, following this, other adventurers began to rustle towards us.

“A- rank magician, isn’t that the realm which only a handful of geniuses can enter?”
“Furthermore, at such a young age … how awesome.”
“She must have a lot of magic power…”

“According to the things I heard just now, it seems like that guy is the 2 girls’ husband.”
“Bigamy!? Furthermore, at such a young age … awesome.”
“He must have a lot of vigor.”

I heard the whispered talks of the adventurers

Regrettably! I’m still a virgin!

Indeed, in my previous workplace – my wife’s Vlad house – if we were to have our first time there it would certainly be awkward, also there’s also no way we can do it while traveling.

In Meiya’s Mansion, the girls each have their own rooms.
Having our first time at an acquaintance’s house, would certainly also be

awkward even for them.
We *do* sleep together in the same futon at night, but….

We kiss and hug each other, but we haven't gone further than that.

The receptionist timidly asks Snow.

"I'm sorry to ask you this, but do you have any magician school certificates which can prove your class?"
"The school in the northern region of the Fairy Human continent. I do not have a diploma because I have yet to graduate from it. I'm treated like a scholarship student there so my graduation is for certain."

The receptionist had a difficult expression after hearing Snow's explanation

"….I apologize once again. If you have no certificate, then I cannot give you any special privileges as a Class A, Will you be alright with this?"
"By *privilege* you mean…?"

She answered my question.

"You can begin adventuring as a level III adventurer. Also, there is a special allowance granted by the Adventurers' Guild for purchasing equipment."
"If it's only that, then there's no problem without it right?"
"Yes, no problem."
"Well then, I shall inquire from here to the magician school in order to confirm whether Snow is an A- Class or not. Though it will take time, if your level is still less than level III when I receive proper validation, please inform me to raise your level when that time comes."

I consented to Snow's verification and abandoned the special privilege.
Leaving that aside, I requested for a quest from her.
The receptionist understood my intentions due to a long acquaintanceship and she showed the duties of a level I adventurer, which is about demon extermination, rather than miscellaneous duties.

This level I quest is a demon extermination in the outskirts of the town.
The target demon is named *Bakupaku*.
The clear condition is to hunt at least one *Bakupaku*

Bakupaku is a four-legged beast
The official documents stated that they were to gather the horns on their heads.
The horns seem to be an ingredient of a beneficial magic medicine.

I received the tag on which the contents of the quest was written.
We received the quest and left the *Adventurers' Guild*.

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First, we went back to Meiya's mansion to prepare our equipment.

The AK47 was for me.
A rucksack that holds a water bottle, the container to put the horns, 2 spare magazines, and 5 sets of 6 『7.62x51mm NATO rounds』which wereChrisse's reserve rounds.
I stocked 2 magazines within the magazine pouch located to the left and right of my waist.
I also equipped a knife behind my waist.

For Snow, the『S&W M10 2-inch』 revolver, with two sets (6 rounds each) of speedloaders in both her pockets. Honestly, this was just for her self-protection. The chance for her to use it, is probably low.
She also equiped a knife to her waist.

Chrisse placed her M700P onto her shoulder using a sling. She tentatively placed her cartridges in a pouch located to the left and right of her waist. However, she was different from us, 6 pieces per pouch with 2 rows of one fixed type. She had a total of 24. In addition, I also gave Chrisse a knife for safety purposes.

We borrowed two horned horses from Meiya and set out from town.
The wide plain outside the town continued as far as the eye could see.

Snow was riding one of the horned horses, while I had Chrisse sit in front of me riding the other horned horse.
Snow learned how to ride horned horses at magic school, while I learned from Gigi-san.

Chrisse searched with her inherently sharp eyesight for the Bakupakus that would become our prey.
There were monsters that seemed to be them, roughly 600 metres in front of us. There were three of them.

We got down from the horned horses, and approached the prey while downwind from them.

"You haven't put a cartridge in yet, Chrisse?"
『I will do so once we are a little closer.』

She took out just one bullet from her pouch, and placed it in her pocket.

Once I was about 200 metres away, I could see them as well.

They were about a size bigger than the pigs and boars in my old world.
They numbered three.
They looked like Malaysian Tapirs with horns and fangs.
Their appearance was a bit fantasy-esque, but because of that, seeing them eat their prey was odd.
They were muscular enough that even I could tell from a distance, and seemed like they would be annoying to take down by sword alone.

However, we have the AK47 and the M700.
We're needlessly overspec'd for this.

"Snow, Chrisse. Are there any people here besides us?"
"…Mn, it's clear."
『I did not catch sight of anyone either. There is nobody here but us.』

So that I wouldn't make the same mistake as the one I made roughly 4 years ago, I made sure that there wasn't anybody in the area but us.
The area around us was a needlessly large grass plain.
There wasn't anywhere a person could hide, but just in case, I had the magician Snow, and the sharp-sighted Chrisse to check.

After this, as decided, we wouldn't be using Body Strengthening.
It'd be annoying to have our magic detected and be forced to escape after all.

I released the safety.
Switched it to semi-automatic.
I pulled the cocking handle, and moved a bullet into the chamber.

Chrisse also pushed one into her magazine.

As we approached the bakupaku by foot, as we expected, they noticed us and became intimidated.
Despite seeing an unfamiliar cylindrical object, probably because of a young age, they came charging towards us without fear.
I shot at them from a standing shooting position.

Three gunshots.

Chrisse cleanly shoots through the middle one's forehead.

I also fired through one of their foreheads.
Another round went through the remaining one's foot to deprive it of it's movement.

Snow gave the decisive blow by magic
The reason for purposely doing this kind double effort is to prevent the prey from escaping if magic is sensed.

I picked up the empty cartridges that have fallen, and placed them into the sack,

"Snow, burn the corpses after cutting off the horns."
"Roger."

As she answered lightly. the horn of the Bakupaku were cut, and the corpses were burned.
I placed the procured horns into the small sack

We returned to the place where we had dismounted from the horned horses
The horned horses didn't seem to be surprised by the gunshots as they did not run away. They were eating grass carefreely.

Afterwards, we traveled to the meadows before the day ended, and got our spoils due to Chrisse's eyesight.
We were able to secure 30 horns in total
One set of ten per person.

We did not go straight to the guild and convert our goods for money, instead, we returned back to the house and placed our AK47 and M700P there first. A precaution to the last.

Of course, we ventured to the guild to update the records of the newest members.
Snow & Chrisse improved their rank to adventurer level II. Mine remained the same.
I was able to begin a favorable new life this way

Chapter 052 – A setback in our New Life

“I think it’s about time: we really need to get self-sufficient.”

It’s the third day since we advanced to Level II Adventurers.
Snow suddenly said that at the breakfast table.

According to her, considering Meiya *is my* disciple, it’s strange to have everyone rely 100% on Meiya alone.
We’re already 14, and next year we’ll be adults at 15.
What’s more, though we’re just beginners, we’ve started working in the adventurer trade.

That’s why it’s about time that we stop depending on Meiya and begin paying for our necessities with our own income——or so Snow was saying.

The lord of the estate, Meiya, objected to Snow’s suggestion.

“P-, Please wait! What are you saying!? I am Lute-sama’s number one student! The belongings of the student are the belongings of the master! That much is common sense! So there is not the least reason for any of you to feel reserved.”

“…Um, nah. Meiya, this time Snow is right.”
『I think so as well.』
“Lute-sama!? Even Chrisse-san!?”

I used hand gestures to calm the agitated Meiya.

“On top of providing the essential magic liquid metal, you’re even providing a place where we can perform research. If you provided our food and shelter as well, that really would be taking advantage of you.”

Having finally noticed after Snow pointed this out, I’m finding this situation too unhealthy.

Certainly, from Meiya's point of view as a rich person, providing for our lifestyle is just a drop in the bucket. Indeed, it's probably a joy for her to to live under the same roof as a an expert in her field of interest, and to be able to ask him questions whenever she wants and receive lessons every day.

But for us, it's something that'll turn us into useless bums.
It's that saying. 『A hedge between friends keeps friends good friends』.

We've lately been accepting adventurer quests, particularly at Level II, so we have a decent amount of money anyway.
I'd also like to contribute to the orphanage.

Taking Meiya's support while donating to Elle-Sensei's orphanage——that'd just be putting the cart before the horse.

"It's just as Snow says. Let's leave Meiya's estate and become independent."
"NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

Snow and Chrisse accepted my decision.
Meiya alone let out a shriek, and began throwing a tantrum like a child rolling around the floor of a toy store.

"I don't want that! I don't want that! What's wrong with living happily with everybody else?! Even though I'm Lute-sama's number one disciple! I don't want to be apart from everyone!"

…It's pretty tough seeing a fully-grown adult act like a spoilt child.
I kindly persuaded the complaining Meiya like a gentleman.
This is what I said.

I won't forget the support that Meiya's lentus so far, and I'll come here every day to research and develop new weapons. To do that, I intend on leasing a house close to Meiya's place.
That's why Meiya can come over to play whenever she likes. We'll welcome her, of course, and she can stay over too.

Meiya wouldn't go against her master's decision, and once she heard she could come play at any time, and might stay over, she folded.
Only, as a compromise, she wanted permission to go to the estate agent

with us. Apparently she plans on finding us a place close-by, no matter the cost.

“Alright, I got it. Then today we’ll be taking a break from research and questing, and all go look for a house instead.”
“Got it～”
『It’ll be nice if we find a good one, won’t it?』
“Please leave it to me, Lute-sama! I know a lot of people, so they’ll be able to accommodate you in various ways, and even though it mightn’t seem that way, bargaining is my strong point!”
“When it comes time to haggle, then, I’ll be counting on you, Meiya.”
“Understood! By all means, leave it to me! Lute-sama’s number one disciple, this unworthy Meiya Dragoon, will gladly stake her life on this!”

I reflexively *tsukkomi’d*, 『No, there’s no need to stake your life』.

And thus, today’s plans were to go real estate shopping.

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We weren’t heading out on a quest for the Guild, so we weren’t wearing the usual rough-looking outfits.
The girls were all wearing the traditional clothing of Dragon Continent .

Snow was sporting a ponytail and a Dragon Dress. It would look unstylish to have her『S&W M10 2”』 in a chest holster, so she had it strapped to her leg. Seeing the revolver peeking out from her legwas oddly erotic.

Chrisse was wearing a Dragon Dress and had her hair done up in Chinese double buns. Because she was slightly built, she really looked like a doll, so it suited her.

Meiya was wearing a Dragon Dress as well, and, with a fan in hand, she walked ahead to show us the way.

I also got from her a traditional male outfit of the Dragon Continent, the Dragon Kung Fu outfit. I do have my gun belt wrapped around me with the 『S&W M10 4"』 for self-defence. But the gun belt doesn't go well with the Dragon Kung Fu outfit.

With my right hand in Snow's, and my left hand in Chrisse's, I left the estate with a 'flower in each hand'.
A carriage Meiya had prepared was stopped before the front gate of the estate.

We boarded the horse carriage.
Apparently the driver had already been told the destination, and the moment everybody was on board,the young coachman began whipping the horned horses on his own.

It took about thirty minutes by carriage.
The place that Meiya brought us to was an estate agent——called a 『Building Agency』 in this world.

The store was a two-story building built from a marble-like stone, and gave the same atmosphere as the shop where I went with Chrisse to buy Karen's present.
When we entered the shop, a middle aged man who seemed to be the shopkeeper ran over with a smile.
Apparently she'd told him in advance that we'd be coming.

"Welcome, Meiya-sama. Thank you truly for making use of our shop today."

The man smiled from the bottom of his heart, and welcomed Meiya.

"To be honoured with the visit of a personage like yourself representing the Dragonoid Race has moved me. It doesn't have to be right now, but would it

be all right if perhaps you wrote a few words about us?" [autograph]
"Yes, that'll be fine."
"Thank you very much!"

I had heard that Meiya was a well-known genius artificer of magic tools, but I had had no idea that she was this popular. The attitude that they took is like how you'd behave if a famous movie star visited.
Even besides the middle-aged man, the other staff members were gazing at Meiya with sparkling eyes as well.

Meiya seemed used to it: she acted like it was nothing, and was relaxed as ever.

"Today, my teacher, Lute-sama, has come to look at the properties. Could you show me the properties close to my estate?"
"Y-, Your teacher, Meiya-sama?"

The man's voice went a little shrill at Meiya's introduction.
He seemed shocked that the genius Meiya had a teacher, and that said teacher was clearly younger than she was.

But he was a professional.
A smile immediately returned to his face as he greeted me.

"Well then, I will select a number of houses close to Meiya-sama's estate, as well as a few other recommendations, so please sit by that counter and wait."

We continued inside and sat at a counter like one you'd find in a bar. We sat in order. Meiya, me, Chrisse and Snow.

Before long, a man brought over to us papers with the houses' details.

"These are the properties close to Meiya-sama's house. And these are the properties that our shop recommends."

I accepted the papers and immediately took a look but… so expensive!
Ridiculously expensive!
The most expensive one was 50 gold coins, roughly 5,000,000 Yen, a month!

Even the cheapest one was 1 gold coin and 6 silver coins, roughly 160,000 Yen, a month!

“My, they’re unexpectedly cheap, aren’t they?”
“However, not one of them is low in quality. Our store is proud to say this.”

Nonono, they’re expensive, aren’t they? Way too expensive, right?
I’m just guessing, but this place isn’t a store for commoners like us, but is a Building Agency targeting people from the upper class.

I forgot to take Meiya’s economic situation and sense of money into account.
A cheaper place that’s big enough for three people is fine.
There’s absolutely no need for a pool in the garden, a water fountain, or a banquet hall so big that you could probably hold a dance party in there.

(Beg Meiya’s pardon, but let’s endure the shame and leave this shop. Then we’ll go to a place that’s more——suited to our status.)

Just as I was about to cut off the man in front of me in order to leave the shop… Meiya arbitrarily advanced the conversation.

“This one is fine. It is right by my estate, after all, and the house is fairly large too. I like it. Let us have this 10 gold a month property for 1 silver.”
“……Eh-?”
“Did you not hear me, perhaps? I asked you to loan out this 10 gold per month property for 1 silver per month.”
“E-, Even if it’s you, Meiya-sama, that much is…”

Hearing the sudden demand, the man whose eyes had been sparkling thus far was now troubled and evading answering.
Well, of course.
No matter how famous Meiya might be on the Dragon Dude Continent, and even if she’s the subject of adoration for the people of the Dragonoid Race, telling him to lend out a 10 gold property (roughly ¥1,000,000) for 1 silver (¥10,000) is obviously unreasonable.
But she fell into a bad mood because things didn’t go as she wanted.

“Could you perhaps speak my name once more?”
“Y-, You are Meiya-sama… B-, But! Even if you are Meiya-sama, there are things that one can do, and things that one can’t, and,…”

In terror, the man fervently wiped the sweat flowing from his brow.
However, Meiya's attitude grew even more unyielding.

"My name is Meiya Dragoon. Moreover, the one that we will have living in that house is my master, the world's strongest magic tool artificing genius, Lute-sama, you know? Just having Lute-sama live there is a great honour. That property would become holy ground. Could you perhaps be intending to take rent from a god, for living in a temple? On the contrary, just having them live there is an honour, so do you not feel that you should be showing your gratitude instead?"

"Or could it be,"——she said, as her eyes glinted coldly,

"That you people wish to lose your place here on this continent?"

With this one line, all the staff of the Building Agency grew paler than ghosts, and began to tremble.
Meiya's words were not an empty threat.
Her name was the most famous after that of His Majesty the Emperor, and if you incurred the wrath of Meiya, who was favoured even by the next Emperor, you really would lose your place on this Dragon Human Continent.

The man in charge of the counter started pleading, with the complexion of a sick person.

"P-, Please spare us from that! My youngest daughter is only 10! If we are driven out from here, just where would we go!?"
"I neither know nor care. Just go wherever you please. If you are unhappy with this, is there not something you should be saying? Or could it be that you intend on disgracing me further?"
"U-, Understood. This 10 gold property will be rented out for 1 silver per month…"
"Hah? Are you perhaps speaking in jest?"
"Uu-, please live in this 10 gold property. We will pay you 10 gold a month to do so, so please…"

"How was I, Lute-sama!? I have tried my best for your sake, Lute-sama! Of course, this much is a matter of course for your number one disciple! And so, no thanks are required. H-, However, if by chance you wish to thank me

anyway, then a bracelet of about *this*size for my left arm as well might be nice~ or so I was thinking. Wai-… Fue?"

Her face red, Meiya turned to look at all of us, and came to know reality.

I, the person that she'd thought would be rejoicing——had instead backed away from her.
Snow and Chrisse had backed away as well.
Chrisse even had teary eyes.

"U-, Um, Lute-sama, Snow-san, Chrisse-san…?"
"As anyone would expect, you'd back away… 'Bargaining is my strong point,' you said… That wasn't bargaining but threatening, right?"
"I-, I wanted Lute-sama to be happy!"
"I'm sorry. I'm a little scared as well."
『That was too terrifying.』

Meiya was knocked out by Snow and Chrisse's words.

I turned back to face the man again.

"Sorry. Please ignore what happened just now. I really am sorry for causing you trouble. Our budget is about 5 silvers a month, so just a place large enough for the three of us to live in is fine. This shop wouldn't have such a place though, would it?"

"I-, Is that fine!? For Meiya-sama's esteemed master to live in such a simple place is…!"
"No, really. Just forget what happened just now, please. If you don't have such a property, then we will head to another store. Even in that case, we won't cause trouble for you later, so please rest assured."

"T-, Thank you very much! W-, Well how about this place?"

I dropped my gaze to the paper that the man hurriedly produced. A two-story 3LDK. Just barely in the high-class residential area, it's a relatively snug house. But the price is 1 gold a month (roughly 100,000 Yen). That's over budget.

“It’s a little expensive, isn’t it?”
“The truth is, the person who lived in this house previously was an elderly person, and their will stated that they wished for the tree to remain. The location is good, but because the tree has grown quite splendidly the place doesn’t get much sun, and so because everyone wants to cut the tree down people avoid this house. For us as well, it would be a shame for the place to be left alone for too long, and so if you would be willing to live here, we would be willing to halve the price to five silvers a month. How about it?”

If we can reduce a one gold piece rent to five silvers just by leaving a tree, then it really is quite a bargain.
What’s more, although it is on the border, it’s still part of the high-class residential area. The security is good there. And it’s close to Meiya’s estate as well. It’s almost our ideal place.

I checked my wives’ expressions just in case, but they too nodded in approval.

“Well then, I’ll go with this one please.”
“Thank you very much! Thank you very much! Thank you very much!”
“We didn’t really do anything worthy of being thanked so much. Ah, we want to buy furniture and stuff as well, so would it be possible to see the house today?”
“That is no problem at all. Hey you! Can you unlock the doors in advance, please? Ah, but because we need to clean it up and check for anything that needs repairing, as well as needing to ensure some of the finer paperwork is done, could you please hold off on moving in until a week from now?”
“Sure. There’s no problem with that.”

“Well then, after you have a look at the property, we will be signing the formal contract. If you are displeased with it, please by all means say so.”
“I understand.”

“Well then, I will now guide you there. Will you be travelling by carriage today?”
“Yes, by hers——Meiya’s.”
“In that case, I will let your attendant know the address. Our agent has already departed from here, and will have unlocked the house.”
“Well then, I’ll be coming back to sign the contract. Well then, you two, shall we go? Meiya too… Wai-, are you still discouraged?”
“I’m just no good at all….”

Meiya was curled up in the corner of the room, hugging her knees.

“Ahh, Meiya, ummm, although your methods were pretty bad, I was happy that you felt that way. Really. But I guess I hope that you won’t use threats to negotiate in the future. I think of you as my important disciple even without you doing things like that.”

“——Lute-sama!”

Just by hearing her name called, her eyes sparkled more brightly than the sun, and she easily made her comeback.
Uwah, so simple.

And so, the four of us got into the carriage and went to have a look at the house.
The employee had already unlocked the doors, and was waiting there for us.
The inside of the house was more beautiful than expected, and the garden was large too. The problem tree was certainly tall, but I wouldn’t say that it was tall enough to bother.

After confirming that there were no problems, we headed back to the Building Agency to sign the contract.
Because they needed three months of rent as an advance payment and deposit, I had Snow and Chrisse take out 15 coins from their purses. While that was happening, I finished signing the contract.

And like that, I got the new home that Snow, Chrisse and I would be living in.

Chapter 053 – The Wash Toilet

Snow and Chrisse already got raburabu, now its Meiya's turn! – Yuushin

Snow, Chrisse, and I rented a single house for us to live in.
It took about a week for the inspections, repairs, and legal procedures to be completed before we received the key.
In the meantime, as we were so busy, we decided not to take on any quests.

If we took on quests while we're limited on time, we might make mistakes due to being restless over our new lives. So, we decided not to do anything dangerous until we finished moving and have settled in.

Then there were the preparations for the move.
Snow and Chrisse were busy choosing furniture and wares for the house, as well as preparing for the party to celebrate our move and new life.

Chrisse was planning on bringing a variety of books from her parents' home. In particular her most cherished book, the fitst book she had ever bought; It was a picture book about heroes and demons, she carefully packed it.

The only guest coming is Meiya.
We have only a few acquaintances here in the Dragon Continent.
I tentatively invited the Adventurers' Guild onee-san receptionist, but…

"This is one of those 'Sharing of Happiness' things, riiiiiight.
AAAaaAAAaAH! I WanT tO gEt MaRrIeD TOoooOOoo!"

She roared at me.
I apologized to her and hurriedly left the Adventurers' Guild.

Then Meiya and I stopped our studies and R&D, and devoted ourselves to making wares for our new life.

For the first time in this world, I have my own house.
There is something I absolutely want to make for that.

The thing I wanted to make was…. a toilet with a bidet—a Wash Toilet.

It's indecent to say, but in this world, the ones they mainly used are basically holes in the ground. Large leaves were sold in bunches as toilet paper.
The texture was like, seriously, WTF.

The Meiya residence, the Vlad house, and the orphanage all had holes-in-the-ground…. I can't stand them no matter what.

Each time I finished doing a #2 and wiped my butt with leaves, I could feel my SAN points being whittled down.

The toilet back in my previous life was a wash toilet.
Because the one in my parents' home was one of those, I asked the installers to have one installed the day I moved out.
The feeling, and a sense of cleanness!! That forbidden fruit which you can't forget once you've tasted it!

So I'm making it!
A toilet equipped with a bidet!

I've already ordered the toilet's body.
One made of white porcelain.

Toilets are almost always made of porcelain, even in my previous world.
I read somewhere that if some other material was used, *it* wouldn't go down as well.

Next is the wash toilet's structure.
In Thailand, in the previous world, it seems they used a hose to directly wash the butt.
But as expected, I prefer Japanese-style wash toilets.

I'm making the nozzle to be able to positioned as I liked, through the use of a rotating lever.

The structure itself is not so complicated.
For materials I used magic liquid metal.

The problems are how to warm the water, and how to make it spray from the nozzle.

The wash toilets in my previous world have two ways to warm up the water.
One's that keep the water temperature constant; the [Heat Preserving Type].
One's that instantly heat up the portion of the water that is about to be used; the [Instant Heating Type].

The way to make the water spray out is simple, through using pistons with a motor, water can be pushed into a pipe.

If this was a world without magic, it would probably be a pipe dream to make a wash toilet without electricity or motors. However, this world has magic; it has magic stones!

These two problems are solved usingmagic stones.
With magic stones that manipulate water and fire, these problems are not hard to solve.

I promptly ran towards the magic stone shop in town.
The inside of the store was decorated with showcases, like in a jewelry store.
The middle aged man who manages the store easily noticed me and started a conversation.

"Welcome to our store, Lute-sama."
"Good day to you—wait, how did you know my name!?"
"Because you are the teacher of the magic stone princess Meiya-sama. It is common sense for us magic stone shop owners in this town to watch her every move."

The small male shop clerk put on an amicable smile.
That's Meiya for you, having so much influence due to being a celebrity.

(*But it's convenient. This way I won't get sold inferior goods or get lied to about the prices.*)

If he did that and Meiya found out, he will lose his place in the Dragon Continent.
The risk is too high.

I promptly consulted with the small, kind-looking shop clerk, and had him show me some appropriate magic stones.

"I'm looking for water magic stones and fire magic stones."
"I see, water magic store to equip on armor, and fire magic stone for a sword, right."
"No, that's not it. I wanted water magic stones to control water to wash my butt. The fire magic stone is used to warm that water up."
"Huh?"
"No, well, I wanted to build some equipment to wash my butt after I'm done using the toilet with water and fire magic stones. I wonder what magic stones are suitable for that?"
"…… Are you making fun of me?"

The expression on the shop clerk's face changed.
His earlier, kindly smile totally changed into a stern look, laying bare his hostility.

"You may be an amazing guy, being Meiya-sama's teacher. You probably could send me to despair without so much as moving a finger. But let me tell you this: I have pride in my work of managing this magic stone shop! And you say things like washing your butt!? Please stop making a fool out of me! Get out! There are no magic stones here for you!"
"P, please wait! Washing your butt with water really does feel good! Even more so when it's warm water! It's a revolution that will change the world! Please believe me!"
"Hey! Get out! Didn't I tell you already, I'm not selling you any magic stones!"
"It's the truth! The butt! The butt really feels good!"

But the male shop clerk did not listen to my pleas, and drove me out of his store.
What I saw reflected in his eyes in the end was genuine anger.

It's not his fault, though.
Washing your butt with warm water after using the toilet—the idea of a wash toilet itself was way too avant-garde for this world to understand.
If he experienced it firsthand I'm sure he will shed tears of happiness at how wonderful it is!

I hardened my heart and swore that I will definitely finish the wash toilet.
Then I will have him use it and feel its magnificence!

I went to another magic stone shop and bought a gold coin's worth of fire and water magic stones while keeping silent about their use.

I returned to Meiya's residence with the magic stones in hand.
I set to work making the wash toilet, borrowing the strength of the magic stone professional Meiya.
I thought it might be fine if it's her, but since there was a possibility she'd become enraged like that magic stone shop owner, I was deliberately cryptic about its use, and explained that I want to shoot warm water through a pipe.

Happy being depended upon with magic stone work, she gleefully cooperated.

"You want to draw magic runes around the water tank so the water would shoot through the pipe, right."
"Then I want to heat that water with magic stone so it becomes warm. Can you draw the warming magic runes on the pipes?"
"Of course! With magic stones this size bringing the water to boil would only take a moment."
"Er, you don't have to make it boil. Just make it as warm as bathwater if you can."

"Is that so… then we need to put in a limiter as well, for safety."
"Can you do that?"
"Yes, of course I can."
"Great, then add the limiter as well."

Meiya started working according to my instructions.

For several days, Meiya and I devoted ourselves to making the wash toilet.
We made the pipe so it could be brought in and out by hand through the use of a handle to adjust its positioning.
The regulation of the water current is made possible by magic runes carved on the exterior of the tank.
Heating runes were drawn on the unexposed portion of pipe to make the water warm.
It became, in terms of the wash toilets of my previous world, an [Instant Heating Type] toilet that heats up only the portion of water that was going to be used.

The water and fire magic stones were installed together with the handle on the wall.
When both magic stones are touched, and the startup spell is chanted, the water flows, gets warmed up and shoots out.

If you don't want warm water, you simply touch only the water magic stone and chant the spell.

When the magic power runs out, the stones can be replaced or charged again and reused.
It was quite eco friendly.

The cost for me and Meiya to make the alternate-world-style wash toilet this time is… Magic stones × 2, nozzle, western-style toilet bowl, materials for other necessary gimmicks—all in all, we spent 3 gold coins (about 300 000 yen).

The house we leased cost 5 silver coins per month.
It was six months' rent.

As for the wash toilets in my previous world, there were ones that cost 300 000 yen if it was one of the more expensive ones.
Because I was making it in another world, that price isn't too much.

I told my two wives about the cost and what I used it for, and….

"Lute-kun was like that with the handguns as well, but you sure are passionate about strange things."
[Oniichan, you shouldn't be too wasteful with money, okay?]

I kind of got treated like a kid without common sense.
It's fine. Once they experience the wash toilet, they'll definitely come to realise its splendour!

Wash toilets are the true forbidden fruit!
A devilish tool that will always hold you captive after you experience it!
I can say with confidence that no matter the world, there is no person that can turn their back to its magnificence!
Feel free to experience the dreadfulness of the ultimate weapon developed in Galapagos Japan.

I pictured the writhing forms of the girls taken captive by the wash toilet, and silently smiled to myself.

And like that, the newly rented house was fully furnished with the Lute-model wash toilet.

Below is a side story. The reactions during the use of the wash toilet.

In Snow's case.
During——『!? Fugyah! W-, What is thiss?! Funyah?!』

After——『Thish ish amajing~ It feels so good, my knees have gotten weak!.』

In Chrisse's case.

During——『!? -u, nn-u-! Nn-…!』

After——『T-, This is a torture device created from the knowledge of the Demon King! I-, I will definitely never use it again!』

In Meiya's case.

During——『L-, LUTE-SAMAAAA! LU-, LUTE-SAMAA!! LUTE-SAMAAAAAAAAAH!!!』

After——『Uhuhuhu, as expected of the greatest genius of this age, Lute-sama. To think he would evolve toilets to this level…-』

In the case of the magic stone salesman.

During——『UHO! Uhohohoho, HOOOH!』

After——『I've been opened to a new world…-』

Chrisse was angry at me with teary eyes.
Apparently it didn't go well with her.
It was popular with everyone else, though.

Chapter 054 – First Night x First Night

Then a week passed.
We finally received the key to the house from the Building Agency.

We brought in our personal effects from the Meiya Residence by wagon.

The furniture Snow and Chrisse bought had also been brought in, so we placed them in the spots we had decided beforehand.
Because all three of us used body strengthening, even Chrisse could carry a sofa all by herself.
There was nothing more convenient than that, to make the work go faster.

By mid-morning we finished tidying up our belongings and had a light lunch.
We used up the entire afternoon making preparations for the party.

The one in charge of the main dishes was Snow.
Chrisse had no experience in cooking, so she prepared dessert with me.
We planned on making [Pudding] and the [Mille Crêpe] that they love so much.

As we finished cooking and reached a point where we could rest, Meiya came along.
As promised, she brought with her some liquor.

At first we told her to come, with no need to bring anything, but Meiya herself seemed to want to give us a housewarming gift. Thus, she chose drinks.
Since this is a special occasion, she announced that she would bring some liquor to liven up the place.

The food Snow cooked was lined up on the table.
Stew, sandwiches, salad, meat dishes, and so on.
For dessert, [Pudding] and [Mille Crêpes] were waiting inside the fridge.

We uncorked the liquor—fruit wine Meiya brought, and had a toast.
Snow and Meiya have had alcohol before.
It was the first time for Chrisse and I, so Meiya gave us some mild fruit wine.

While drinking the delicious wine, I sampled my dear wife's home cooking.
We made pleasant conversation, a lot of time had passed before I realized.
Meiya stood up and said she was going home.

"What are you saying. Aren't you staying the night here? I've prepared a room and made the bed for Meiya's use already."
"I'm grateful for your consideration, but this is your moving day. Even I wouldn't be *that* insensitive."
"?"

I had trouble understanding what she was talking about and cocked my head to the side.
After the three of us saw her off, I finally realized what she meant.

(*T, that's right! There will be nobody but us in the house tonight!*)

It's been six years since I brought up the matter of marriage with Snow, and several months with Chrisse.
However, we never did anything ecchi throughout that entire time.
The reason was because we stayed in other people's homes, the in-laws' home, and cheap inns on the road.

It was obviously unpleasant to have our first times there.

But now we're at our own home! Anything is allowed, nobody will come bother us!

I was really late to understand what Snow meant when saying 'separation' and 'independence'.
Certainly, while it's true that Meiya is rich, relying on others for our basic necessities was too much. I'm finally reflecting on it.

"Well then, Chrisse-chan and I are going to tidy up a little then go take a bath."
[Snow-oneechan, let's wash our bodies together.]
"Yeah! It'll be fun."

The two of them cleaned up happily together, before heading to the bath.

Although I say bath, it's just a large metal container with hot water, from which we pour water on ourselves as we clean up using a towel.
Like the difference between heaven and earth compared to the bath at Meiya's estate.

(But well, if we want to get in a bath to relax, we can always just go to Meiya's place, so it isn't a problem.)

If it's us, then we basically have a free pass for entering and exiting as we please.

While Snow and Chrisse were in the bath, I couldn't calm down so I paced about the lounge room with the sofa.

(In situations like these, would it be better to prepare the bed? To begin with, do we have condoms in this world? I've never ever seen one… But no, maybe it's just that I've never had an opportunity to get involved with a tool of that sort, and they actually do exist! In that case, as a man, it would've been my responsibility to buy it!)

There's no way that I could go flying out of the house, in the dead of the night, to go knocking on the door of a closed tool shop.
To begin with, I don't even know if they have them.

(To begin with, am I supposed to do it with both Snow and Chrisse for our first night? No, but if it's only Snow tonight, and Chrisse is left for tomorrow night, various things will become troublesome after all… In that case, should I have one in the bedroom, the other in the guest room, and visit them one by one? But having our first experience together while the other one is waiting in the guest room would be even more awkward, right…?!)

While I interchanged between sitting on the couch and pacing around in anxiety, the two of them left the bathroom.

"Lute-kun, we've kept you waiting. The bath is free now."

The two of them showed up in the living room, Snow in white pajamas while Chrisse in pink.
They were the matching pajamas that the two of them got to celebrate our new house.
The two of them were so close, they were like sisters.

[We'll wait in the bedroom first, all right?]
"…Got it. Once I'm done with my bath, I'll head over too."

Judging from their attitudes, there won't be any sexytime tonight.
The two of them were heading to the bed together after all, and their attitudes were casual.

I felt this complex mixture of disappointment due to my expectations, and relief from being saved from my ill-preparedness.

I entered the bathroom.
Snow had replaced the hot water for me.
There was steam rising from the hot water in the large tub.

I poured water on myself with a bucket a few times before cleaning my body with a towel and soap.
I poured water on my head as well, so I emptied the tub and set it down against the wall.

Leaving the bathroom, I dried my body with a towel.
After that I put on the matching pajamas that Snow and Chrisse had prepared for me.

Turning off the magic lamp in the bathroom, I headed up to the bedroom on the second floor.
At Meiya's place, we were each allotted our own rooms.
It was the same at the Vlad House.

Occasionally, the three of us also slept together at Meiya's house.
I couldn't lay a hand on them those times, and it left nothing but painful memories of self restraint.

(It's our own place, but since there probably won't be any sexytime, will I have to suffer the same thing again…?)

With some pretty heavy steps, I opened the door to the bedroom.
But the bedroom lamp was off.
Are they two of them sleeping already?

"? Snow? Chrisse? If you've turned off the lights already, does it mean you're already asleep?"
"Don't worry, we're still awake. Close the door and hurry over to us."

Though I was wondering what was up with her response, I did as I was told.
Once I closed the door, the room was now pitch black.

I reflexively gathered mana to my eyes.
My night-vision was enhanced.

"!?"

In the bedroom was a large canopy bed.
It was big enough that five adults could sleep comfortably.
Snow and Chrisse had taken a liking to it, so they unanimously bought this bed. I think it might be the most expensive piece of furniture we have.

Sitting atop the bed were the two of them, with their shoulders pressed up against each other.
What's more, what they were wearing weren't the pajamas from earlier, but a negligee on top of string panties.

Snow's were white, Chrisse's were pink.
Just like their pajamas, they had their different colours.

They were wearing nothing but their underwear, and were apparently sitting on those clean bed sheets while waiting for me to leave the bathroom.

I had accidentally enhanced my night-vision.

Snow had taken down her usual ponytail, and let her silver hair run down her back. She was red for a different reason than the blush hue normally had after a bath, and was gazing at me from on top of the bed. Unlike how childish she usually was compared to her age, right now she was looking at

me with moist eyes. The chest pressed back by her negligee seemed larger than it usually did beneath her clothes. Isn't she an F?
Although Snow seemed embarrassed, she showed no signs of trying to hide those delicious-looking fruits.

On the other hand, as you'd expect, Chrisse's body seemed childishy next to Snow's. Her chest was flat, and her thighs were thin.
Although Chrisse was an unripe fruit, her expression was filled with seductiveness. With her usual pure smile and eyes filled with anxiety and expectation, she waited for me. The pink negligee that covered her body, and the underwear tied by a string——at a glance, it might have seemed unsuitable for her. But instead, the unfitting sexy lingerie on her forbidden, childish limbs made my temptation rise.

Two unbelievable beauties, and what's more, both of different types, were asking for me together.

"Snow, Chrisse…"

Like a sleepwalker in the midst of a sweet dream, I drew towards the girls with unsteady steps.
When I reached the bed, the two of them suddenly lay down, and shyly begged for me.

"Please have a good time eating me up, woof."
[I want Oniichan to love me lots and lots.]

Snow spoke in the dog-speech that she used to hate, whilst Chrisse rubbed her thighs together anxiously.
It's obvious that I was freed from the chains of reason.

If you include my previous life, then my soul was 41 years old.
Together, I had my first time with both of my wives.

Chapter 055 – The Dark Elf, Xiah

AUTHOR NOTE : There is no Transexual here.
————————————–
A few days after the moving party.
In the morning, I slipped out of bed alone and went to the kitchen.
Wearing a pair of briefs and a shirt, I put on slippers and boiled some water.

I sliced some bread I bought yesterday and spread it with butter. I put some lettuce-looking vegetables and ham in between and a simple sandwich was made.
I made a salad with the leftover vegetables.

Once the water boiled, I brewed some Dragon Continent specialty light brown Chacha, that looks like oolong tea, and brought it to the bedroom.

Usually Snow and Chrisse would make breakfast but yesterday I gave it my all so I tired out both of them — they are now still in dreamland.
As a husband, it's my duty to show consideration for my wives' health and at least make them breakfast.

Speaking of my schedule: since my first night after moving to this house…
I spent all morning at Meiya's workshop developing armor and accessories.
In the afternoon I meet up with Snow and Chrisse to go buy food and window-shop.
Then once night falls, I carry them both, head straight for the bed and *let's go*!

This is how a standard day goes.
Regarding contraception, the girls drink a special magic potion. Being able to use that as contraception is just what I'd expect from an alternate world.

Every once in a while, I would ask Meiya's approval and secretly receive quests and earn money in the morning with just the two of us for the sake of the bracelets I'm going to give to Snow and Chrisse.

I was able to safely have my first time with them both the way we wanted to, but… unfortunately cosplay clothes and lotions weren't sold in this world, they don't exist.

I want to put sailor uniforms, bloomers and army uniforms on them!
I want them to wear camo-patterned bikinis and hold AK-47s! I want to have superior officer and NCO play! China dresses exist so I did try having them put it on, and it was really exciting!

Also, I want all three of us to get in a single bathtub and flirt.

"I don't have a bath at home after all. Of course I can't exactly use that wash-basin. I could borrow the bath at Meiya's house, but—nah, I can't do that."

Even though she's my disciple, doing lotion play in an acquaintance's bath feels too awkward.
There's also the fundamental problem that there are no lotions.

"—No, wait. Since I could make gunpowder then I should be able to make lotion, shouldn't I!?"

A flash of genius!
An amazing flash of insight happened upon my grey matter!

I immediately began experiments inside my head.

First I built the mental image of 'lotion'.
A large part of it is made up of water, so the magic is handled a lot like water magic.
I breathed in, breathed out, and concentrated.

I detached a portion of magic from inside my body, moved it to my hand, and made it manifest.

"Ooooh! It turned into lotion!?"

It was a transparent, slimy liquid.

I rubbed it onto both my hands.
When I separated my hands, the slimy liquid made threads.
Perfect! Right now there is a perfectly made lotion in my hands!
Magic is amazing! Magic banzai! Khorosho!

This is a revolution!
If I can ask Snow or Meiya to make lots of these I can do lotion play that I only saw on DVDs in my previous life!
Ooh! Wild ideas just keep coming forth!

As my heart was trembling from the numerous possibilities, I heard footsteps coming down from the second floor.
It looks like those two had woken up.
I washed my hands.

The water boiled just in time, so I brewed three people's worth of*chacha*.
We carried breakfast from the bedroom to the living room for a change of place.

I gave Snow and Chrisse, who were still looking sleepy, a morning greeting with a smile fresher than highland grass.

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"You know. I think we should get started working for real soon."

As the three of us sat on the living room chairs, having my special-made breakfast, Snow put out a proposal.
Certainly, no matter how we say we have an excess of funds, we'll become useless people if we stay like this.

"You're right. We should start working soon just like Snow says."
[That's right. Let's aim for level III again.]

Chrisse agreed, showing a motivated face.

“Level III, huh….”

I stroked my fingers on my chin in thought.
Exterminating monsters around town can get you up to level II, but that won’t do for level III.

The basic quests for level III are typically things like going far away to another town to deliver things, exterminating high level monsters, or guarding wagon convoys.
Things that demand an adventurer’s special expertise.

Also, from here on we’ll need to put security deposits.
It’s a system to prevent taking on quests without actually participating in them. The security deposit is of course paid back after the quest is complete.

But that is exactly why I’m hesitant.
With quests that I’ve never done before, along comes trouble.
About 4 years ago, because of my lack of basic adventurer knowledge, I was tricked by fake adventurers and sold off as a slave to the Demon Continent.

Though it was good that I was able to find my wife Chrisse as a result, the trauma etched in my heart doesn’t disappear so quickly.
Wagon escort missions seem simple at first glance, but I don’t know what’d happen if I were suddenly attacked in the middle of the night by a large number of people and fell into panic. It’s one thing if it’s just me, but I have two wives I have to protect, so I can’t just recklessly fire my guns at random.

That indecision probably had something to do with the reason why I have been living the lazy life recently.

“Then you can just buy a slave and all will be fine!”
“Uwaa!? M, Meiya! Since when?!”

Before I knew it, Meiya Dragoon was standing at the living room entrance.
As usual, she was in a dragon dress and holding a folding fan.

“I knocked the front door but nobody replied so I showed myself in!”
“Showed yourself in…. what about the key?”

“I *am* a genius magic tool developer second to Lute-sama. Opening that kind of lock was no trouble at all. Ahem desu!”

Don’t ‘ahem desu’ me!
Meiya proudly puffed up her large chest.

But what she said had truth to it.
Even if they were introduced by the Adventurers’ Guild, I can’t trust another adventurer so easily.
So rather than that, buying a slave, which carries no risk of betrayal, is a better plan.

Luckily I have some funds to spare.
At worst I can just borrow from Meiya.

“……. Should we try and give it a look?”
“Well, just looking is free, after all.”
[Besides, there might be a person like onii-chan we might be able to pick up, too]

After getting my wives’ approval, regardless of whether or not we would end up actually buying one, we decided that we would go have a look.

“Then let’s go to the slave market today!”

Likely because she was happy her plan was accepted, Meiya enthusiastically did an air punch.

We’ll be taking a break from the armor and accessories development today.
Since we’re already going, I think we should probably do some shopping and invite Meiya for dinner after we have finished looking at the slaves.

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There's but one place that sells slaves in this town.
A number of different slave merchants have gotten permission from the kingdom and set up together as the "Brutus Slave Market"

For defensive reasons, the [Brutus Slave Market] was set up behind the Adventurers' Guild.
It seems to have been done to make sure that any problem can be handled quickly when it happens.

We've been to the Adventurers' Guild several times, but other than Meiya, none of us knew where the building was.
We've never had any business that takes us behind the Adventurers' Guild, so we never noticed it.

The first floor of the [Brutus Slave Market] has cages for display, but the first floor had no entrances or exits.
It's to prevent the slaves from escaping.
The same reason why I was once locked down in the basement of [Rano Slave House].

The [Brutus Slave Market] operates by having multiple slave traders bring their slaves.
It had a system where, upon entering the market, new slave traders had to pay an entrance fee after having passed strict examinations and are then allowed to put up their slaves for a fixed period of time.

Because of this system, the slave traders compete with each other, increase the quality of their slaves, have a wide selection of races, and there are no traders who cheat on their sold merchandise.

In the Demon Continent where I was taken to as a slave, people wanted mine slaves for digging coal, gold, silver, copper, magic stones, and such.
Of course, there is demand for mine slaves here in the Dragon Continent, too. However, in this town demand is not only for physical laborer-type slaves. There is demand for various types of slave.
Since bringing together many slavers means the quality and species of slaves becoming more diverse, this system was adopted.

The second floor is the reception area.
We went up the stairs and inside the room, and saw that similar to the Adventurers' Guild they did business behind counters here too.

Meiya explained how it all worked.

As I thought, this is not a place just anyone can come to.
At least, there are age limits.
Adults, over 15 years of age.
We were 14 and 13 years old so we normally couldn't come inside, but since there is a guardian, Meiya, there seems to be no problem.

It seems you present the kind of slave you want at the desk, then they give you a listing of slaves that meet the criteria.
Afterwards, you go down the stairs connecting the second floor to the first.
There were numbers placed on the cages, so you go there and confirm the actual thing, and negotiate with the official standing by the cage. This is done to let it not become an exhibition, prevent raillery, because the typical slaves are lightly dressed or naked.
The reason the slaves were lightly dressed is because getting them to strip for evaluation each time would be a pain, and it would ruin their physical condition to have them keep wearing clothes and stripping, which would harm their value as merchandise.
Because of that the first floor had its temperature raised with magic.
The reason the first floor is entirely walled in is not just to prevent the slaves from escaping, but also so that the room temperature doesn't go down.

The receptionist noticed Meiya and immediately stood up and rushed over.
Then, without saying a thing we were taken behind the reception desk—to a reception room.
A total VIP treatment….

It seems when you're someone of Meiya's class, you don't go and see the slaves, but mention your requirements and the slave would be taken along to this room.
As expected from the Magic Stone Princess, whose name is known not just in the Dragon Continent, but throughout the world.

In under 10 minutes, the man in charge of the [Brutus Slave House] showed up.
Talking about slave traders you'd picture a guy with a scary face, but this guy's face seemed like the goodness of humanity itself. He had a protruding belly, making him look much like a Daikoku.
"Welcome, welcome, Meiya-sama. I'm the representative in charge of the [Brutus Slave House]. My name is Enos. Pleased to make your acquaintance."
"How do you do, Enos?"

Meiya exchanged a handshake with Enos.
Then I shook hands with him as well.
Meiya sat down in the seat of honor, while the three of us sat on the sofa opposite of Enos.

"Well then, Meiya-sama, what kind of slave do you hope to see today?"
"It's not me today, it's my master Lute who's coming to see some slaves. I'm only escorting him."
"Hoo, so you are Meiya-sama's rumored master!"

Having been introduced by Meiya, Enos stared at me, eyes wide in wonder.

"If you're Meiya's master, then we as well have to give our all and introduce you to our recommended slave."

Enos laughed, his large belly shaking.

"Then what kind of slave do you hope to see?"
"Umm, one with adventurer experience, aged 15 – 20, and I don't care about magic ability."
"How about the gender?"
"Female! ——————————But it's just a preference, so if there's one that meets the conditions, I don't mind if he's male, okay?"

I unintentionally said so but immediately made an addendum.
There's no change in the attitudes of Snow and Chrisse sitting to my left and right.
On the contrary, that scares me.

But see, a young male would be unpleasant in lots of ways.
Which is why I chose female…… I don't have any ulterior motives okay?

As I was making up excuses in my mind, Enos racked his brains for a slave that met my requirements.
After some time he seemed to have thought of something, raised his face and said with a smile.

"There is one who meets your requirements. She's a slave I'm handling, her name's Xiah. She's 16 years old, she was an adventurer for 3 years since she was 12, and is a level III. She's a female from the Fairy Race, Dark Elf Clan, and a B-plus ranked magician."
"A B-plus ranked magician slave, so she'd be worth about 500 gold, I think?"

I was amazed at the cost Meiya mentioned.

(*F, five hundred gold!? That's about 50 million in Japanese yen, right? Screw that. I don't have that kind of money!*)

I quickly gave up on buying her.
As expected, it would be better to have just the three of us adventuring and raising our levels.
She's too expensive, no matter how you look at it.

"Normally I would offer her to you for that amount, but… if you're willing to take her I don't mind handing her over for 250 gold."
"Half off from the normal price? That's quite a discount."

Enos smiled bitterly at my cynical remark.

"Of course, I don't intend to deceive Meiya-sama's master. She's in good condition, no sexual experience, a virgin. She can properly handle magic, too."

Oi, why are you emphasizing the virgin part?
Well, it's an important part, in a way.

"It's just that Xiah is a strange one… she sold herself off as a slave."
"Sold herself off?"

“We get those sometimes. People that got too poor and were willing to be a slave even for free. Being a slave they don’t have the right to their life anymore but they can escape the fate of dying from starvation tomorrow or the day after. If they’re lucky they can get bought by a good master and live a peaceful life. Only… Xiah freely gave herself up as a slave on one condition.”

And that condition is?

“It was [Only sell me to a master I consider acceptable]. With that contract, a friend of mine took Xiah as a slave, but after about 1 year there was no master she would accept and soon there were no longer any buyers. Obviously, my friend was astounded and gave her over to me saying [I can’t handle her anymore!]”
“I see… so if this Xiah girl would accept me as her [Master], you are willing to sell her to me for half the usual price?”
“Yes, that’s how it is.”

Certainly, she’s a strange one.
No, I’m not sure I can just call her ‘strange’, she’s more of an eccentric.

“Are there any attributes she wants, or any particular basis for who she’s willing to have as her master?”

With a troubled look, Enos shook his head.

“That is simply, to quote the person herself, ‘I’ll only be sold to a master I recognize myself’, a single point. Since that contract is there, I cannot sell her on other conditions…. So therefore, if it’s Meiya-sama’s master, I thought for sure that Xiah would recognize you, so how about it?”

I see why he’s selling her dirt cheap at half the market price.
Well of course she’s in a sense a bargain slave, but I don’t think she’s likely to accept me as her master.
It’s no use anyhow, so should I refuse, I wonder?

“How about you at least meet her for now?”

Enos asked, his face looking like he’s pleading me.
Judging from the way he looked, it seems she’s unsellable dead stock that

just takes up maintenance costs. He's clinging on the slight possibility that Meiya's master might be recognized by the eccentric Xiah as her master.
If all goes well, if Xiah were really pleased with me, he might be able to sell her off before he expends too much capital.

Honestly, I myself want to see what kind of girl she is.
Trying is free after all, I don't think I'll do anything more than see her.

"……. All right. Let's just try and see her. Don't complain if she won't recognize me as a master, okay?"
"Of course! Please wait a little while."

Enos gleefully stood up from the sofa and left the reception room.
After about 10 minutes, he brought along a girl held between two guards.

"Thank you for waiting. This is Xiah who we talked about earlier."

I turned my eyes towards her.
Her eyes carried a strong will. She was about as tall as Snow, probably a little shorter. She had sharp eyes but if she put her face in order I could call her cute.

On her neck there is a magic prevention collar. Her hands and feet are restrained with sturdy chains, and held from both sides by the guards. All in all they've prepared measures to be sure.
The clothes she's wearing are worn out, top and bottom. Her navel is visible. Her breasts are just a little larger than average. About D-cup I guess?
Her black hair is cut to shoulder length. Her pointed ears, characteristic of Elves, peeked out from under her hair.
This seems to be Xiah, the eccentric Fairy Race, Dark Elf Clan girl.

"This person is the one who is willing to buy you. Go on, say hi."

Um, I haven't decided on buying her, though….

With her sharp gaze, Xiah stared at us as if she was evaluating us.
We're getting our roles reversed here.

"……. My name's Xiah, pleased to meet you."

After she was finished with her evaluation, she curtly greeted us.

A Dark Elf *and* a [bokukko]!?
That's some character.

"Good grief, don't you know any manners?"
"I've worked for a man of high social standing you know? It's not quite that I don't know any. I just don't bother."
"Really, you …"

Enos tiredly sighed.
He introduced her to us again.

"This is the Lute-sama who will buy you. The teacher of that Magic Stone Princess Meiya-sama. How's that? He's a fitting person to be your master, isn't he?"
(Told you I haven't decided that I would buy her yet)

Xiah shrinks her pupils at that introduction with great interest.

"Really, so you are *Lute* huh."

Her reaction is almost like someone I know.
But I have no recollection of meeting her before?

"Erm … Have we met somewhere before ?"
"I wonder …"

Xiah began to giggle.
As I desperately tried to remember her, she dropped a bomb that blew my mind.

"*Tanakakouji* — Don't you remember hearing that ?"

Tanakakouji— *Tanaka Kouji*!?

Suicide, letting one die, bully, delinquent, stabbed to death, hanging by the neck — the trauma in the distant past became a black tsunami and painted out my soul.

“UwaAaAaaaaaaaaAAAaaaaAaaaaa!!!”

My scream reverberates in the reception room.
I lost my consciousness afterwards.

That was once the name of a friend who was in part the reason I abandoned everything in the previous world, became a hikkikomori, and died.

Chapter 056 – Condition for the Master

Author's Note:

The Black Elf chapter isn't a transexual (and again, I have no intention of doing any transexuals).
Hypothetically, another reincarnator appears; I intend to have them have the same sex as they did in the previous world.
I apologize for having written in a way that caused misunderstanding.
————————————-

"…, this is the bedroom ?"
When I woke up, I was in the bedroom in my house.
I recognized the canopy above my bed.
I got myself up.
Outside, the sun is setting; it's becoming dark.
"…To think that I get to hear the name 'Tanaka Kouji' in this world."
No, because I died, reincarnated and got to keep my memories from the previous world, I thought that there are other people like me too. But to think that it's someone from the same world…
I didn't think that the name of someone related to me would come up.
"Just who is that Black Elf?"
No matter how hard I try to dig through my memories, I can't remember anything about her.
She knew my name but not my face — or so was her attitude.
Could there have been someone that let her know that I'm a reincarnator?If so, then how does that person know I'm a reincarnator? I don't understand their motive; why didn't that person come and meet me themself?
Moreover, knowing that 'Tanaka Kouji' and I are related, could it be that the person behind her is 'Tanaka Kouji' himself ? If so. then why did he not not come see me himself? Generally, how does he know I'm the reincarnated 'Hotta Youta' ? It's unthinkable that he figured it out just from the fact that I develop guns…
I sat up on the bed and let idle thoughts run over my mind.
No matter how much I think it's useless.
To know the answer, I can only ask Xiah herself directly.

I sighed, got out of the bed, and went down the living room on the 1st floor.
Snow, Chrisse and Meiya were drinking tea.
Seems like they were waiting for me to wake up.
Snow, who has good ears, knew I was coming down from the 2nd floor, then she spoke with a worried expression the moment I enter the room.
“Is it okay to get up already ?”
“Yea, I’m okay. My bad for making you all worried.”
I patted Snow’s head.
Chrisse poured me a cup of warm chacha. I patted her head too.
I flopped down on the sofa and drank the chacha in one go.
The leaves’ scent, the slightly astringent taste and the warmth have revived me.
I hold the cup with both hands and said to everyone:
“I think I will buy that slave called ‘Xiah’.”
As if they’ve predicted this, they weren’t surprised, but they did have worried expressions.
Snow ask me as the representative.
“I didn’t mind that, but …. that Xiah seems to know Lute-kun, but does Lute-kun know her?”
“I tried to remember her too, but I don’t have any recollection.”
“Then, what is that ‘Tanakakouji’ she had said ?”
“……..”
As I thought, they heard it.
But, there’s no way I can explain to them that I was reincarnated with memory from previous life, and Tanaka Kouji is the name of the guy I let die without helping him.
“…Sorry, I can’t tell you now.”
“Got it. I will wait ‘till Lute-kun talks.”
[I will wait too.]
My wives Snow and Chrisse nod with a smile without any pretension.
….I’ve got really good wives.
Then I turn around, face Meiya and bow my head.
“With that said, I want to buy that slave, Xiah, at all costs. But I don’t have 250 gold coins so I’m sorry, but can you lend me the money?”
“Please raise your head, Lute-sama! As I’ve said before, disciples’ belongings are teachers’ belongings. In other words, my money is Lute-sama’s money! Please don’t hold back; use them to your heart’s content!”
“Thank you, Meiya. But I will pay you back.”
“Lute-sama is so mean,” Meiya unhappily grumbled at my answer.
I didn’t mind that and continued the talk.
“I want to go the slave market as soon as it opens; won’t you come with me ? I’m still only 14-years-old, which is not enough for the required age to

enter the market, so I want you to accompany me."
"Understood! Of course I'd be glad to accompany you! Well then, to go together early in the morning, I'm staying the night!"
Meiya smiled brilliantly, because it was her first time staying over at my house.
It seemed that she would return to her house once to prepare for the stay-over.
Then in the meantime, we prepared the guest room and dinner.
For now, everyone put Xiah's matter aside and happily started preparing for the stay-over.

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The next morning, I skipped breakfast and had Meiya accompany me to visit the [Brutus Slave Market] first thing in the morning.
We went up the second floor and showed ourselves at the reception desk, then immediately proceeded to the reception room from yesterday.
Enos showed up to the reception room with a sickly pale face and pressed his head on the floor.
"I humbly apologize for introducing Meiya's master Lute-sama to a terribly rude slave yesterday! I will ensure that something like that doesn't happen again from now on, so please have mercy on me!"
I think I've seen that attitude before.
The man working for the estate agency, from when I was looking for a place to move to, acted the same way.
It looks like after I fainted yesterday, he was thoroughly yelled at and threatened by Meiya.
First, I urged him to raise his head.
"Please raise your head. Actually, *I'm* the one who should apologize for causing trouble yesterday. I won't show such an unsightly display again, so can I see yesterday's slave, Xiah, one more time? If she'll allow it, I'll be sure to buy her."
"W, we're of course grateful for that but will it really be all right?"
"Yes, please."
"Understood. I'll call her right away then; please wait a little while."
Enos left the reception room in a hurry.
Then a little over 10 minutes later, Xiah showed up held in between the same two guards as yesterday.
A magic-prevention collar was on her neck. Her arms and legs were

restrained with sturdy chains, and she was wearing ragged clothes top and bottom–just like yesterday.
I stood face to face with her and asked:
“Xiah, I want to buy you. So, I want you to somehow accept me as your master. Of course, I’m not going to be rough. I’ll release you if you desire it. I just want you to answer a few questions.”
“……. hmm, despite how you look, you gather up a lot of money quickly. Did you borrow from that genius magic-tool inventor over there?”
I nodded.
Xiah looked down at me and laughed through her nose.
“So in the end, that’s all you are. Looks like you don’t have what it takes to be my master, either.”
“Is that how a Fairy race, and a slave at that, talks to Lute-sama who ranks higher than the gods!? Know your place!”
“Meiya, be quiet.”
“B-, but Lute-sama!”

“I said be quiet.”
“I-, I’m sorry.”
My tone was unexpectedly cold.
Meiya shuddered like a puppy that was drenched in the rain……. That was a bit too cold. I’ll apologize to her later.

But before that, I shouldbuy Xiah no matter how.
“So, how do you suppose you’ll accept me as your master?”
“Let’s see… In that case, show your strength by fighting me. If you can win, I’ll recognise you as my [Master].”
“Alright. Let’s do it. If I win I’ll have you accept me as your master. Don’t take back your words if you lose.”
“*tch*! Don’t look down on me! There’s no way I’ll do something*that* preposterous!”
“Then let’s set up the conditions in detail.”
I ignored the exasperated Xiah and indifferently continued the discussion.
Xiah and I totally ignored everyone else and decided on the conditions for the match—The match will be a hand-to-hand fight without magic. That was because Xiah had a magic-prevention collar attached. Blinding and groin attacks are forbidden. The one who faints or lost the will to fight loses.
The location for the fight is the [Brutus Slave House], first floor. That place is solidly built, and if you clean up the resting space in the middle, it will be wide enough for a fight. It’s completely surrounded by walls, so we won’t cause trouble outside the store.

Of course, the representative of the staff of the [Brutus Slave House], Enos, has something to say.
“L-, Lute-sama, please do something that would damage the goods like that *after* the purchase. Also, we’ll be in trouble if you fight here.”
“We’ll be using the first floor now, so gather up the chairs in the rest area and put them aside.”
“N-, no, well let’s do something like that once we’ve written up the contract—wait! Why do I have to use honorifics towards a slave!?”
“Sorry, *please* let us use the first floor. Please.”
“It’s certainly still early, so there are no other customers, but this place is used together by the slavers guild so I can’t—”
“*Please.*“
Rather than my urging, it was probably Meiya who was sitting next to me with a glare that said “So,*you’re* also going to deny the divine Lute-sama’s request? You want to die? You want to lose your place to live in the Dragon Continent that had had a better effect on him?”
Enos gave in.
“Ugu, w-, why do these things always happen to me…. I was yelled at by Meiya-sama yesterday, too; it was horrible…. Alright! But don’t go complaining to me, whether you win or lose! Also Xiah, after this fight I’m definitely going to let you go! I’ve had enough of this jinx of a slave! Don’t ever show your face in front of me again!”
We were able to get the [Brutus Slave House]’s representative Enos’ permission.
Thus begins the hard fight of Me vs Xiah.
——————————————————————
As said at the start, it’s not transexual. And again, I have no intention of writing transexual.
Hypothetically another reincarnator appears, they will have the same sex as theirs in the previous world.
I apologize for having written in a way that may have caused misunderstanding.

Chapter 057 – Serious Fight Club

『Slave Market Brutus』 First floor is surrounded by four walls.
The slaves are put in an iron cage, lined up in a row alongside the wall. In the middle, each of them are also lined up in two columns.
In the cages where the slaves were, there was a number on it, and in order to advertise each of them (the slaves), the merchant sat in front of the merchandise.

On the second floor, the receptionist tells you the (TL: cage) number of the type of the slaves you wish for, and the customers go to the cage of that number. Naturally, there's no problem to look around for in the other cages besides the one that was directed.

Wall, floor, and roof are made out of stone; with light created by magic, the inside was thoroughly illuminated.
Windows that are about 30-centimeters-wide, with wooden slatted shutters that open and close, were all open.
Led by guards wearing armor, we who have descended from the second floor were being gazed at curiously by the slaves inside their cages.

It's as spacious as three gyms connected together side by side.
In the middle, in order to create a space (for the customer) to take a break, rest chairs were placed there. If those chairs were put away by the guards, then a space for competition would be created instantly.

For the match, the shackles on Xiah's hands and feets were taken off by the guards.
She moved 2-3 times to loosen up her muscles.

I also left the gun belt below my hands and shoes that I was wearing to Meiya who was standing near me.

"You didn't really have to imitate me and take your shoes off. If you want to, how about as a handicap, you can use that magic device-ish thing?"

“Nah. It would be troublesome if you complain when I win afterward. Or you’re letting me use it so you can make an excuse later ?”

Xiah made a face full of displeasure.

“Fu~n, I pray that your ability is more than that insolent mouth of yours.”

She glared at me with a sharp gaze.
I returned an indomitable glare.

“Lute-sama, please don’t over do it.”
“I understand. Meiya, it is too dangerous, so please leave here.“

She nodded her head and went some distance away.

A guard acting as a referee stood before us.

“Again, to confirm the terms: no magic, no weapon, no blinding (as in damaging the eyes), no kickingon the balls (the crotch), and the opponent who faints or loses the will to fight will lose. Furthermore, if we deem this match to be too dangerous, we will stop it. Are there any questions (problems)?”
“No problem.”
“Neither do I.”

With our mutual consent, the guard took some distance and gave us instructions.
Distanced about 10 meters, the guard with a volume loud enough to be heard even outside gave us the signal, “START!”

Xiah and — I immediately took our stances.

I set up both my hands close to my chin.
She also took a similar posture.

“Lute-sama, please do your best!”

While listening to Meiya’s encouragement, I confronted Xiah.

She tiptoed around me clockwise with a tempo.

"_____Fu!"

With a sharp step, she released a left-jab kind of punch. Flustered while backing away, barrages of attacks persistently followed me.
I drove her away with a jab.
Unfortunately, it was dodged with a duck; conversely, a right punch sunk into my body.

"Gu!"

The damage received wasn't much, because I stepped back, but my movement was stopped.
She continued with a left middle kick.
I reflexively guarded my side — but she flexibly changed the trajectory and the kick hit my cheek.

It can't be a Brazilian kick!?

"….!?"
"WOOO**oooooooo**OOO**oo**OO**w**!!!"

I couldn't bear it and my hand touched the floor as I fell.
Excited from the fact that an attack went through, the slaves and guards exclaimed to the point of ear-hurting.

"Lu, Lute-sama! To say Lute-sama is someone like the world's national treasure is not an exaggeration! To do something such as kicking, the god will not accept such blasphemy!"

"Fu~n, only this much. Seems like you are nothing but that impudent mouth of yours."

Xiah ignored Meiya's screams, while gazing down at the guard who fell with cold eyes.
I grinded my teeth and got up, and lunged a right-upper that she magnificently dodged backwards.
Once again, a distance was created.

'I am not underestimating her because she is a woman…..but her attacks are very precise. I feel like I will be defeated if I let my guard down.'

If I were to be defeated then maybe I can't even ask why she knows the name 'Tanaka Kouji'.
My fighting spirit reignited.

Xiah observed me closely.
The martial art that she used is not something orthodox in this world.

She took a rhythm with the tips of the toes and steadily dealt damage. If I attacked, she would retreat without doing anything reckless.
Completely hit and back away–a polished hand-to-hand combat technique.

However, compared to Master and Gigi-san, the punch was weak. There's no impact.
Having gone through Master's frightening experience first-handedly, this level was not scary at all!

That time, it was my turn to attack!

"Fu!"

I attacked with a straight left jab!
But she stepped back and dodged it.

Furthermore she circled me clockwise with light steps.
Ignoring it, I continued to jab at her.
Xiah was barely dodging while she measured the timing.

I purposely attacked with a right straight with an exaggerated motion.
Matching to that timing, Xiah aimed for a counter. Just like I predicted!
We both dodged at the same time.

Distance became zero.
I immediately locked both of my hands at Xiah's neck!
The posture is known as Muay Thai's neck-wrestler.

"!?"

She lost her tempo because of confusion from first time seeing this move.
Seizing that chance, I attacked her side with my right knee.

“Gaa!”

A painful breath leaked out near my ear.
Without loosening the grip, I released a second one!
In the same place, I attacked with my right knee.

While grasping painfully, Xiah thrusted me away with both of her hands.
Once again, another distance was created between us.

However, the damage on the abdomen seemed serious; breathing roughly, Xiah supported herself with her knee.

“UO**o**O**o**O**ooooooo**O**oo**!!!”

The guards and the slaves bursted out with cheers.

This time, the position reversed where I was looking down at her instead.

“Whether I’m just an insolent mouth or not, you understand now, right?”
“You, you, baaastard!”

With a painful expression, Xiah tried to stand up.
However, the flame inside her eyes has not burned out yet.
I as well.

“Here I go!”
“Yeah! Come at me, Xiah!”

We both shouted out a cry of war and charged at each other from the front.

Both of our war cries and the slaves, including the guards cheers, merged together.
Our voices probably reverberated all the way outside.
Overcoming the man- and woman-gender distinction, Xiah and I exchanged blows.

The outcome was——double knockout.
The conclusion of the match was a draw.

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Xiah and I shaked hands at my house, where we were isolated from people.
On the table in front of me, there were cold drinks on top.
She drank it in one breath, then vigorously put the cup back on the table.

“At first, I thought you were a weak guy, but you have guts. Truly, it was a good fight.”
“You too, Xiah’s fist is really effective. Especially when that left kick hit my face; it was so dangerous.”
“No, no, I should say the same. When we glued to each other and your right knee hit my abdomen, I thought by ribs were broken.”

And so, Xiah praises me about the battle.
Apparently, she’s the type that doesn’t hold grudges, as there was no ill feeling after the battle.

The match was double knockout — and ended in a draw, however we were able to safely buy Xiah.
We went home after creating tons of bruises and injuries.

The wounds were healed by Snow’s magic.
Thanks to that, no matter where you’d look, there was not even a single scratch.

As fellows that had traded blows, a strange feeling of solidarity was born.
Xiah lowered her head deeply as she sat still on the sofa.

“Well then, again, please take care of me, master. While I’m still inexperienced, I will work hard to become useful for you.”
“Stop calling me “master.” Sure, I bought you and I’m your master on paper. But aren’t we comrades who had punched each other with all our

might? Call me by my name: *Lute.*"
"No, even if you say that … well then from now on, I'll call you*young master.*"
"Well if you say so. Take care of me too."
"It's my pleasure, young master!"

Connected by the friendship of fellows who have fought each other, which is not comprehensible to Snow and Chrisse, we shook hands again.

Done with the sportsmanlike conduct, I ask her some questions.

How did she know about me?
How does she know the name *Tanaka Kouji* ?

That's it, 2 points.

Xiah talked without the coldness she displayed like when she was at [Brutus Slave Market].

"It's related to a secret I've been hiding. That's why, young master and madams; please don't tell anyone."

She said so beforehand.

"You may not believe me but … since I was small, I have had this*Oracle*-like power that let me hear God's divine message."

But it seems that since this power was only one-sided, God couldn't hear her wish.

Due to that oracle, she knew my name, and if she says *Tanaka Kouji,* then she would be bought by a fitting master — by me for sure, or so she was told.
It seems the duel with me was just to confirm whether or not I really was a fitting master for her.

It's an unbelievable story for us …. but it's a fact that Xiah has been bought by me as a slave.
Xiah too was finally being all smiles with joy, because her earnest petition

was fulfilled.
I thought for sure that she had some kind of connection to Tanaka but …

I still had an uncomfortable feeling.
But Xiah is not a bad person. I could tell precisely because we traded fists.
Also, because we've made the master-servant contract, she couldn't betray me and put me at a disadvantage.
So was this discomfort just my imagination?

Not minding my tinge of discomfort, she happily bowed her head with a smile.

"I am truly happy to be able to meet a suitable master, thanks to this power. I'll be in your care from now on."
"Me too, I'll be counting on you."

We stopped the chat then and decided that Xiah would live with us in the house from now on.
Her room will be in the first-floor guest room.

I spent the day buying Xiah's clothes, underwear, and accessories.

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The next day at the Meiya residence.
I had her watch the shooting of the [S&W M10], [AK-47] and [M700P] at the shooting range by the workshop.
Because from that day forward, I wanted to have her use them too.

Snow, Chrisse and I each respectively fired the [S&W M10], [M700P] and [AK-47].

Xiah slowly released her hands that had been holding down her pointed ears, she had a surprised look in her face.

“To even be able to make something like this… I see, the Magic Stone Princess didn’t call you her master for nothing.”
“I’m going to have you use these too from now on.”
“It is indeed a wonderful magic tool, but I don’t know if I can use it well…”

She said in a reluctant tone.

“Xiah, when you were an adventurer, what kind of weapons did you use?”
“I used knives and twin swords. So I don’t handle ranged weapons too well.”
“Ugh, twin swords, huh…”

One of the fake adventurers who tricked me and sold me off as a slave had twin swords.
Uuuuh…. my trauma.

“W-, well, if it’s you, Xiah, you’ll be able to handle it with a little practice. Besides, I don’t mind equipping you with a knife just in case. We’ll go to a weapons store later and buy something you like.”
“Thank you very much, young master.”

If it came to it, I could even make her a knife myself.
There was also the option of having her use one of the special-purpose knives the Russian army uses.
Let’s try things out when we would have had time afterwards.

I considered researching knives alongside making the tools and accessories. There also were several other things I wanted to make.
Also, as for Snow and Xiah’s AK-47s, I decided that making them would be practice for Meiya as well.

Chapter 058 – Level III Promotion Quest

About a month and a half later, we were running quickly while wearing full equipment in the middle of a thick, verdant forest.

We were wearing field clothes with belts around our waists, equipped with several pouches attached to those belts by ALICE clips.
We had combat protectors on our elbows and knees.
Our combat boots were firmly planted on the ground.

Xiah was at the lead, followed by Snow, Chrisse, and I lining up behind.

Through her eye-protection gear (goggle-type), Xiah aimed her Meiya-made AK-47 at the prepared target and fired.

BANG!

The target on the ground had its center blown away.
Snow and I with AK-47s then shot through targets hanging from tree branches.
Chrisse stayed behind while watching our surroundings.

Once all targets were shot through, we started moving again.
We continued the training until all the prepared targets were destroyed.

The final target was shot from 100 meters away right on the bullseye by Chrisse.

“Welcome back, everyone!”

Once we finished training, we slipped out of the forest to where Meiya was waiting.

The Meiya Residence maids prepared chairs, a table, and a parasol—making a simple rest area.

We were outside of town at a nearby forest.
We put on a notice at the Adventurer's Guild and did some outdoors training.
Monsters were previously driven away.

But still, there seemed to be some left, so we dealt with those that we encountered during training.

The one who sensed the remaining monsters faster than anyone else was Xiah.
Before she became a slave, when she was an adventurer, it seems she took the role of a scout, sensing monsters' movements before anyone else could.
Her presence-sensing towered above others' by far.

It was to the point that Xiah declared that "While I was an adventurer, I never got caught in a surprise attack even once".
We believed her and made her a scout that time—in my previous world, she'd be called a Pointman.

The result was beyond imagination.
We'd probably have used this formation again the next time it's needed.

We took off our eye-protection gear and put down our AK-47s and M700P.
I took off my helmet and sat on a chair alone.
I wiped my head and neck with a cold, wet towel the maids handed me; it soon became stained with dirt and sweat.

I took off the cap off the canteen that was attached by ALICE clip, then I emptied the lukewarm water.
After I rehydrated myself, the sweat poured out again, and I received a new towel.

After I enjoyed my little break, I checked everyone's equipment' conditions.

"In the training, have you noticed anything that bothers you ? Like, is your movement is restricted, or does the size not match or is it hard to use?"

"**As I thought, I don't need the helmet!**" x3

OH, all the girls objected with "HELMET, NO!"
I gave them before training, but they all had their reasons and didn't wear it even once.

Snow's was because "My ears hurt."
Chrisse's was because "Uncomfortable so I can't concentrate."
Xiah just said one word in "nuisance" and put it away.

Even though I diligently made them ….
As a result, I was the only one who was using it.

"An..anything else ?"
[Onii-chan, can't this eye-protection gear be easier to see through ?]
"Yeah, I did my best though …"

The eye-protection gear was goggles-type glasses.
In battle, there are many potential damages to your eyes–wind and dust, ejected cartridges from allies, and scattering pieces of wood or rock caused by a bullet. There are also fragments from the blast of magic and such. If your eyes get hurt, then your combat potential will drop significantly. For those reasons, it becomes a necessity.

The problem is the glass part.
Some products like [Ess Ice] that is currently adopted in the American army have strength that can even withstand shotgun buckshot.
But that stuff doesn't exist in this world.
Meiya and I collaborated and did a lot of trial and error; as a result, we chose goggle-type eye-protection gear. For the glasses part, we made them in the shape of beehive with magic liquid metal. For the gap, we used the magic stone's power placed at the back of the head to create a thin water membrane to prevent small dust, sand and such.
But using it in reality does obstruct your visibility a lot.
But if I make the beehive hole bigger, then it won't be able to block incoming fragments. The water membrane isn't that strong, so I could only experiment over and over to find the balance afterward.

“Understood, I’ll devise it to make it a little easier to see. Anything else ?”
“For me it’s this … bulletproof vest? …It’s a little tight, especially around the chest area.”

The bulletproof-vest name is the same as the previous world’s, but I made it to defend against arrows, spears and swords but not bullets.
The material I’m using is a monster called Pterosaur that resemble dragon, they have wings in place of hands.

Even though the defensive power is lower than a dragon’s, the price is reasonable, I lined the scales up and fixed them to a khaki-coloured clothes.
A light but also high-defense product.

But the elasticity is pretty low.
Snow’s then growing breasts were being cramped at that point.
It was the night-hustling fault of mine though!

“Go..get it, I’ll tide it over. Anything else? Any problem with the AK, Xiah?”
“Absolutely none.”
“That’s obvious! Because it’s a product that has been made by my and Lute-sama’s teacher-student lovey-dovey collaboration! Please handle it with care, Xiah-san”

Right. The AK47 Xiah was using was made together by Meiya and I.

Ever since Meiya met me, she had been studying everything about guns all the time.
Furthermore, in order to remember the iron plate not with just her head but also body, whenever she had time, she touched, licked and smelled it to experience the strength, and she punched it, chewed it, and pressed it against her cheeks to feel the coldness, too.

The result of that endeavour: she finally acquired the power to imagine it vividly.

And as I took care of Snow’s AK, Meiya did Xiah’s. While checking the parts together, we assembled and made it.

Surprisingly, at this stage, I discovered the magic liquid metal’s weak, problematic point.

I thought that the more magic I poured in, the stronger metal it produces, but it turned out that the magic liquid metal had a property that if the magic exceeded a certain threshold, it wouldbecome brittle.

Meiya and I made the same part, but somehow, there were a lot of cases where hers was abnormally brittle.
At first, we thought it was because she couldn't imagine vividly, but the fault seemed to lie in pouring in too much magic.

If I recalled correctly, it was the same with alcohol; at 90%-plus, the sterilizing property drops instead.
At about 70%-85%, the sterilizing property becomes its highest, or so I read in some medical manga.
Magic liquid metal probably has the same property.

It's a property that was only discovered because it was made by B- rank magician Meiya.
It went gone undiscovered because it was been made by the no-talent magician Moi. It was one act that made me realized again that my magic pool was really low.

But it was a problem that could be solved by adjusting the amount of magic poured in.
The problem was then gone because Meiya adjusted the amount of magic she poured in.

Again, about AK production, I designed some small parts to fit the girls' personalities.

Snow's design was almost the same as mine.
The only difference was that it wasn't black but white.
Maybe it was because of her name, but she liked to use white.

That's why I changed the colour so they could be differentiated at a glance as to whose was whose.

In Xiah's case, the stock (the farthest part at the back of the gun that is placed against the shoulder) is not metal frame. The open hole is filled up, thereby making it heavier than our guns.

According to the person herself — she didn't like it because it was too light and thus made her feel as if she's not carrying anything.

After training, I briefly asked everyone, but it seemed there was no special inconvenience.

"Well then, tomorrow let's go to the guild and see if there is any Level III quest."

Everyone agreed.
Finally, we started to do quest to get to Level III.

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The next morning, the four of us—Me, Snow, Chrisse, Xiah—had breakfast.

Since we weren't likely to go on a quest right away, we did not carry AK-47s, and we went to the Adventurer's Guild in plain clothes with only gun belts hanging from our waists.

This is the first time we came with Xiah, but she took a wooden tag branded with a series of numerals with practiced hands.
Soon our number was called.

"…… tch, *welcome,* ***did you get another wife***?"

The demon race oneesan, who always looked after us, received us in an irritated manner.

"No, she's not my wife. We were about to rank up to Level III, so we employed her. We're still beginners, so there are lots of things about adventuring that we still don't know about."

There was no need to expressly state that Xiah is our slave in public.
If we hid the brand on her arm and took off her collar, nobody could have

told by looking.
Being accompanied by a magic-user's slave might have troubled us by causing something annoying.

We told that to the person herself.
Xiah took out a tag from her neck and handed it to the receptionist.

"I'm Xiah. Pleased to meet you."
"Excuse me. I'm pleased to meet you, too. Xiah-san is a Level III, aren't you? So you're taking on a quest to raise the others to Level III, is it?"
"Yes, please."

Having Xiah's answer, the receptionist fluidly turned over some documents.
She's good at what she did and had a good appearance and character, so I wondered why couldn't she get married….

The receptionist presented us with a sheet of paper.
Without looking at the document, she read out the terms written on it.

"So how about this one? The requested matter is to guard the transportation of some packages. The destination is from here through the dragon mines to the dragon kingdom. It will take about 16 days, and because of the long duration, each person gets two gold coins this time. Food and drinks are to be prepared by yourselves. The employer prepares nothing other than a carriage. The day of departure is in the morning the day after tomorrow. Should you accept, you are to come to the Adventurer's Guild at noon tomorrow to meet with the employer."

The transported goods were something related to magic tools.
There was already one team working as guards, but the employer seemed to want another team just in case. Because it was so sudden, there was no problem with using it to rise to Level III—that's the situation.
It was certainly convenient for us.
Xiah examined the request and told the receptionist that we accepted it.

"Well then, we'll take this, please."
"All right. All of you please lend me your tags. Also, from Level III onwards you're going to have to put in some deposit money. That'll be one silver coin per person this time."

The procedures regarding our quest acceptance that time were handled by the only Level III with us, Xiah.

We handed tags and the deposit money (4 silver coins) to the receptionist.
She smoothly filled in the quest with a magic-quill pen.

Once she finished, she returned the tags to us.

“Then see you at the Adventurer’s Guild at noon tomorrow.”
“Understood. Please tell the employer that we won’t be needing a carriage.”
“Alright. I’ll be sure to tell them.”

Her work finished, Xiah left her seat.
We followed along behind her.

“Hey Xiah, why did you refuse the carriage they prepared?”

Since she refused, we had to prepare one by ourselves.
Which meant there would be extra expenses for that.
Xiah explained to us as we walked.

“If we don’t prepare one ourselves, they’re going to put us with the other team on a cheap carriage and horned horses. The employer would want to pin down their expenses. For our own safety, we have to loan or prepare a carriage ourselves beforehand, that’s how adventurers do it.”

It seemed that if the adventurer didn’t have money, they would be using the allotted carriage and horses.
We never knew of anything like that.
I was really glad that we bought Xiah.

Then we turned towards the carriage-sellers.
Once we loaned a carriage, we went to the marketplace to buy everything else we needed.

In order to go on the Level III Quest the day after tomorrow, we began our preparations.

Chapter 059 – Duel

The next morning after, we accepted the Level III quest from the Adventurer's Guild:escort the wagon that's loaded with magic tools.
To meet with the client and other escorts, we went to the guild a little before noon.

We entered the building and asked the usherette, we then got led into the reception room.
After a while, the client and 4 other escorts appeared. The usual Demon Race receptionist girl also showed her face, maybe to bear witness.

"I'm the client, Gomugo. I deal in magic tools. Please take care of the escort tomorrow."

Gomumo the client had 2 horns sprout out from his head.
It looked like he was from the Dragon Race.
Middle-aged and no white hair yet, but the wrinkles on his face stood out.
His height was about 170-centimeters-tall, he had a mustache like a hairy caterpillar under his nose.
He seemed to be a good guy.

"I'm a Level II adventurer, Lute. I'm doing this for a test to get up to Level III, but that's a different matter, and I will give it my all to do the job. Please take care of me, too."

After I showed him my adventurer tag, we shook hands.
Snow, Chrisse, and Xiah gave their own greetings after me.
The greetings went on smoothly.

"Gomugo-san, no matter how much you need some hands, requesting kids like these for the escort is just a waste of money."

The first three that took up the post as guards all had horns growing out of their foreheads, so they must had been Dragon Race. A giant of a man who made holes in his helmets and protruded his horns from there, a nimble

man shorter than me, and a leader-looking man next to them who interrupted us.

The leader-looking man was easily 180-centimeters-tall, his forged muscular body without any excess fat could be seen even through his civilian clothes. He also had neater features than the other two.
His hair, which was just a little long, was tied behind his head, and from his waist hung an expensive-looking sword that looked out of place with his rough civilian clothes.

From the looks of them, they all appeared like veteran adventurers.

“Symil-san, you’re being rude no matter how-”
“I’m only telling the truth here. The adventurer business is not a kid’s playground. I don’t know what they’re planning to do; but if they don’t do it well, then not only us but also Gomugo-san may face danger. Because of that, it’s be better to clearly tell them this.”

I can understand the leader-looking man—Symil’s point.
A Level II caravan escort is not individual but group work.
One person’s mistake can plunge the whole team into danger.

Again, it’s not impossible for them to think we’re going to push all the work to them and just take the money.

Because in reality, aside from Xiah, we’re all 13- and14-year-old kids.

The Demon Race receptionist girl started speaking.

“Symil-sama, they’re adventurers that have been judged by the Adventurer’s Guild that they can be Level III without any problem. Actually, Xiah-sama is a B+ rank magician, not even to say Snow-sama is a A- rank magician. You can’t judge a book by its cover, you know?”
“B+ rank, and even A- rank, you say !?”

Even the two men behind Symil made surprised faces.
Gomugo, the client, smiled like he got an unexpected piece of luck.

“Now that is reassuring to have an A- rank magician escort me. Looks like the security is guaranteed this time.”
“Ku…!”

Gomugo, who held the right to employ, had totally wanted to hire us.
If it’s like this, then no matter how much Symil and the gang make a fuss, the decision won’t change.
Instead, if they make too big of a fuss, it wouldn’t be strange if their contract got cancelled.

I tried looking at them, they look like they’ve totally lost their faces as adventurers.

The receptionist girl poured more oil onto the fire.

“Furthermore, Snow-sama and Chrisse-sama are also Lute-sama’s wives, you know. The marriage to these beauties of Lute-sama’s is really enviable– really… jealously … enviable.”

Scary, scary.
She was radiating a dark malice just like a monster straight out of a Japanese horror movie.
I felt that I was gradually getting to understand the reason why she couldn’t get married.

“Ah, and to even be able to **marry** two beautiful girls like them **at the same time**…!”

Symil’s group shivered with shock.

“Ehehehee, Lute-kun, she said we’re beautiful girls. Us. Beautiful girls.”
[You’re making me embarrassed.]

Snow and Chrisse were happily fawning on both sides of me.
Snow even started sniffing my scent.
Stop it, you, don’t sniff at me in front of other people.

“E..even flirting …”

Symil and company made bitter faces and gritted their teeth loud enough for us to hear.

They literally worked with their own lives on the line to finally reach Level III.
And yet from below, a boy younger than themselves brought along some overpowered but beautiful girls to help rise to Level III—one of the girls he brought along was even an A-minus-ranked mage, a rank only a handful of talented people could reach.

If I were in his shoes, I'd probably be like him…. no, I'd even be more envious, I'd be hatefully envious.

"……. Alright. I'll accept that the girls are strong. *But*! The boy, just the boy, I'll never accept him! You fight me and show me what you've got *right now*!"

Which is why I kind of expected it to turn out like this.

I breathed a sigh and gave him my conditions.

"Alright. Let's fight it out. However! No hard feelings, no matter who wins or loses. After this, neither of us will say or do anything to provoke each other. We will go on this quest and do it businesslike—these are my conditions."
"Alright. I swear on my name as an adventurer. But if you lose, I'm going to have you do as I instruct throughout this job."
"Alright. If your orders aren't unreasonable, I will do as you say during the quest. Of course, that is if I lost."
"You've got guts. I'm looking forward to seeing you suffer."

Just like that, Symil and my duel began.

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The location for the duel was at the practice grounds behind the Adventurer's Guild.

This was the place where normally retired former adventurers would take newbie adventurers for practice, and it was also where the Adventurers' Guild staff would teach the art of self-defense.

It was the size of a gymnasium.
Laid along the walls were materials, lumber,swords, spears, greatswords and the like that had their blades destroyed during practice.

Symil and I stood 5 meters away and faced each other.
The Demon Race receptionist acted as referee.

"You can use your usual weapons inmagic tools, because by Snow-sama's and Xiah-sama's grace they will use healing magic. Most injuries can be healed, but please be careful not to kill your opponent."

We nodded to her words.
I chose to use the S&W M10 4-inch revolver hanging from my gunbelt, Symil chose to use the sword hanging from his waist.

As he slowly drew the sword out, he began saying something.

"I'll say it before we start, I'm Symil. ***Symil the Gale*** is my name."

Sorry, I still dunno you.

"This is my *Gale Sword* imbued with wind magic. Feel free to let it cut you!"

In short, a magic stone charged with wind magic got inserted into that sword, from the name it sounds like it has the power to shoot out *kamaitachi* or blade of wind.
Why are you taking the trouble to tell me your power.

And calling a sword socketed with just a magic stone the Gale Sword or whatever, so lame …. did he name it himself? I questioned his taste.

Symil showed a composed smile, he must've thought of my astonishment as panic.
The receptionist girl raised her right hand.

“Well then, start!”

“Uooooo! Mince him! Gale Swo–**GYARGH!**”

I activated Body Strengthening on my entire body for just 5 seconds just in case.
I did a quick draw in under a second, hitting Symil on the shoulder.
He was taken by surprise by the sudden pain and sound of the gunshot and grasping his shoulder, dropped the sword that he had raised overhead.

“D-, damn you…”

As an active adventurer, Symil seemed to be able to bear the pain, and thus he tried to pick up the dropped sword with the hand on the other side of his immobile shoulder.

BANG.

“…!?”

I shot another .38 Special (9mm) in between his outstretched hand and the sword.

“…… you still want to continue?”

I pointed the muzzle at him as a threat and muttered in a low voice:

“I-, I give!”

He immediately understood that he couldn’t win and declared his loss.

This way, I could get him to recognise me without a problem, and we were then able to accept the quest.

We once again introduced ourselves to a dejected Symil and checked their adventurer tags.
Symil’s group were all Level III adventurers.

Chapter 060 – Battle Time

This time, the quest was a Level III caravan escort.

The destination was the Dragon continent's capital; if we didn't take detour, then it would have taken about 10 days to reach.
But by the halfway point (after 5 days), there was a place we would stop by next.
That place is the mining town Vesta.

Since Vesta was on a mountainous area, we had to pass through a forest where a lot of monsters appeared along the way.
It would take us about 4 days to get to Vesta.

We will drop the luggage there and pick up new luggage. The plan seemed to be to stay there and rest for about 3 days.

After we get out of the mining town, we will head to the capital.
This too, will take about 4 days.

In short, 5 days to the halfway point, 4 days to Vesta, 3 days to rest, 4 days from Vesta to the capital — 16 days in total.
Once we would arrive at the capital, our job would be completed.
It was a quest that would reward 2 gold coins (approximately 200,000 yen) for about 15 days of work.

It was a price that would include a wagon, food, and inn lodging for rest days. The total amount of working hours was long, but if one counts in the days where we didn't have to fight monsters and rest days, then one could say it was a pretty good job.

I left the house to Meiya in my absence.

"Please leave it to me, Lute-sama! Lute-sama's first disciple, Meiya Dragoon, will show you that she can perfectly protect the house!" or so she spiritedly

said, but I wondered why that instead of thinking of her as reliable, I felt anxiety building up inside of me …

And before departure, Snow and Chrisse brought presents and did a courtesy call around the neighborhood.
It was so they could take a look at our house once in a while when we were away.
There was nobody that would hate two cute young girls coming to greet them with presents.

They were really too good for me.

The first day after the departure.

The road to the Dragon Kingdom was made into a highway, and because there was a lot of traffic, all the dangerous monsters were basically wiped out already.
We were hired for simply passing through the forest on the way to Vesta.
Passing through the forest typically made the chance of encountering monsters higher.
That's why he hired escorts.
The wagon of Symil's 3-man group was at the front, then the client's 5 wagons, and, finally, my group's wagon at the end.
Total of 7 wagons.

As expected, the first 5 days of travelling on the highway were lively and peaceful.
But if there was any problem, it was …

"We can't use the wash toilet while travelling."

I sighed while swaying along the luggage on the wagon that was coached by Xiah.
It hadn't even been 1 hour since we departed, but when I thought about not being able to use the wash toilet, I naturally let out a sigh.

Snow felt the same and sighed together.

"Once you know that pleasantness, you can never go back."
"I want to hurry up and go home to use the wash toilet."

On the opposite side, Chrisse shook her head with a grim face.

[That demon king's weapon, I don't mind not having it at all!]

Chrisse seemed to be hostile about the wash toilet somehow.
I wanted to ask her for the reason the next time she was.

But really, there was no way I could have made a simplified, portable wash toilet and load it on the wagon.
In the wagon, there was food, weapons, ammunition, sets of protectors, sets of clothes, blankets, saddles, bridles, and 2 barrels of magic liquid metal for precaution — all the necessary items for travelling were packed tightly. We were able to create water with magic, so we didn't bring any.
And we needed space to sit in too, so there would be no space for the portable wash toilet.

Xiah, who was sitting on the wagoning seat, learned the existence of the simplified wash toilet and started mumbling.
Of course, Xiah had experienced the wash toilet too and already became a slave to it, in both her mind and body.

"If I asked that person, then maybe even while travelling ? But no, to have that person carry the wash toilet is a little …"

Seeing that serious back of hers, I was a little hesitant to call her out.
Couldn't be helped … I decided to give up on the wash toilet and make use of the free time I have now.
I took out 1 barrel of magic liquid metal, holding it between my legs.

"Lute-kun, what are you doing?"
"Huh? Well, I'm free, so I thought I should make some prototype."

Around the time that I almost finished making protectors & accessories, Snow's and Xiah's AK47s, I moved on to make other equipment.
That is — the hand grenade.

Literally "*a grenade you throw with your hand,*" it was also called the "*hand-thrown grenade.*"
A grenade is an explosive, small bomb that will scatter fragments and shockwaves if it hits.

The word "*grenade*" came from the Spanish word "*granada*" — "*pomegranate fruit.*"
And it was known as "*hand grenade*" in English.

Hand grenades are attested to have existed as early as the 13th century. In the 17th century, troops known as "grenadiers" also existed.
At first, a hand grenade was made from a ceramic alcohol bottle, a cast bronze, and an iron ball … stuffed with black powder and attached with a fuse.

Then in England in 1917, hand-grenade research began.
In 1921, the strict definition of 'hand grenade' was produced.
This is that definition:

1: It explodes when hit from any angle.
2: Hand grenades and rifle grenades work without needing much work or tuning.
3: It has no external protuberances that could catch on clothing.
4: It's waterproof.
5: Even if one makes a mistake when throwing and drops it, it'll still be safe.
6: It has a kill radius of 10 meters.
7: A rifle grenade doesn't damage the rifle, and it has the ideal range.
8: It can be stored for long periods of time without deteriorating.

After that, hand grenades came to be produced by many nations.
Then, hand grenades evolved into two kinds: the offensive [*concussive grenades*] and defensive [*fragmentation grenades*], each having their own uses.

Concussive grenades are grenades that do damage with the [shockwaves from the explosion].
The shell wrapping the explosive was relatively thin in order to increase its blasting power.
In open spaces without cover, they both have about equal power, but its uniform kill radius of 10 meters is small compared to the fragmentation grenade.
Because it was made to be usable in areas without cover (without catching the thrower up in it).

Fragmentation grenades, as the name suggests, do damage through fragments scattered around by the explosion.

I'm getting a little sidetracked here, but … the model commonly referred to as "pineapple" have grooves carved in on the shell to scatter well when it explode. But in WWII, explosives' and fragments' creations were been studied, and it was confirmed that the grooves don't create better fragmentation at all. At best, it's only useful for preventing slipping.

That's why there are a lot of American-made hand grenades that don't have grooves but are round nowadays. The reason being "*if it's round like baseball that the soldiers are used to then, it's easier to throw.*"

Back to the topic—The insides of a fragmentation grenade is fitted with fragmenting material, such as wound-up metal bands.
Its kill range is larger than explosive grenades at about 15 meters, and it is normally thrown from behind shelters (like a trench) to avoid the fragments.
I first decided on making [fragmentation grenades] for defense.
I thought that because it had a large number of parts, I should have started on it while I had time.

Around the time I completed making protectors & accessories, Snow's and Xiah's AK47s, I made the important parts (core, shell, pull-ring safety pin, firing pin spring, firing pin, handle and such) out of magic liquid metal. On that regard, I took detailed notes, reached a decent level and made finished products for all the parts.

But the problem was the explosive.

For example, what if I used the propellant I made out of smokeless gunpowder, put it in the grenade, and blew it up? What would happen?

Even if it was to explode, the power would be far behind a normal grenade. Why is that?

Compared to the explosives used in hand grenades, such as TNT, smokeless gunpowder had an overwhelmingly slower combustion speed (heat-energy transmission speed).

The combustion speed of powders for rockets, cannonballs and bullets was about 10-100m per second.
Whereas the combustion speed for explosives, such as TNT, reached 3000-8500m per second.

Furthermore, the high explosive [RDX] had a combustion speed of 8700m per second.
Octogen (HMX) had a combustion speed of 9200m per second.
The instantaneous temperature reaches 1500-4500 degrees centigrade.

The technical classification for the ones used in handguns are [propellants (powder)].
Then, the ones used in high-power shells and inside explosives are [blasting powder / explosives].

The [blasting powder / explosive] I was making to pack in the hand grenade that time was the one called TNT.

Because I could reproduce the handgun powder with magic power, I expected that I could also make TNT for the grenade…. but in actuality, I tried making several prototypes at the Meiya residence, but it didn't go well.
Compared to the powder used in handguns, smokeless gunpowder, it felt like it consumed more magic power.
And I thought I had gotten the hang of it….

Therefore, since I finally had free time while we were travelling in the wagon, I thought I'd tackle the production of TNT explosives and hand grenades again.

"Hee~ is that so?"
[I don't really understand but, Lute onii-chan is amazing.]

I left out the part I couldn't tell them — WW I & II — and explained the hand grenade, but they only gave generic answers.
Clearly, they didn't have any interest.

The two of them lost interest in what I was doing and sat down next to each other peacefully.

“Well then, let’s continue the talk from before.”
[Yes, the debate about whether Lute onii-chan’s smell or blood is better, right?]

What’s that? How scary.

Snow, with her scent fetish as always, would sniff my shirts in the laundry or the ones worn on me after a workout. Chrisse looked like she missed her blood bag and thus wanted to want to drink blood, so I let her have a little. By the way, whenever I spent the night with her after I let her drink blood, she would react better than usual, maybe because of her heightened sensitivity.

They discussed the good things about them having different tastes and references harmoniously, not strained at all.
I was happy that the fellow wives got along with each other, but I was a little turned off by the content of the talk.

Like that, my first Level III quest smoothly progressed.
Only 7 days after the departure did the problem occur.

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We arrived at the halfway point of the highway to the Dragon Kingdom after 5 days as planned.
From the nice-looking meadows, we pressed on to the road situated between a forest that led to the mining town.
Mining town is as the name says: a town with a main livelihood of mining.

It was located on the mountain side, we had to pass through the forest.
And that raised the chances of encountering monsters.
In other words: from that point on, it was the real thing.

When we entered the forest's main road, we braced ourselves, for the air has changed.
But the monsters that came out were just the monsters we hunted around the town from Level II quests. Furthermore, not in a big pack; at best, it was just 4 to 5 at once–not a big deal.

As if having too much energy to spare, Symil's Level III group jumped out and killed everything with great speed.
Thanks to that, we didn't get any action.

I got to take it easy, but when it was time to make a camp, Symil sarcastically said "Really, this is why I said Level II won't be much of a help at all." Even if you lost against this Level II in a flash, is his memory that bad?
…Well, it was better than him picking a fight again, I guess.

As for the night watch, the duty was divided between my group and Symil's. First was my group, then the latter half was Symil's group.

My group divided further into two groups to do night watch.
First was Snow's and Chrisse's group, then mine and Xiah's group.
For the night watch, Xiah's presense-sensing magic was exceptionally useful, and I was mostly just holding her back.

Incidentally, the drops from defeated monsters belonged to the adventurer in this case. Meaning, they were bonuses outside of the quest.
Because we were riding a wagon, transporting the drops was also easy.
The bonuses and the quest reward together made for quite a modest sum of money.

The trouble happened in the afternoon of the second day after entering the forest road.
We had only a little more to go until we got to a place that was good for a campsite, and the forward wagon stopped.
Our wagon couldn't help but stop, too.

"I hear voices from the front wagon, sounds like a quarrel."

The member with the best ear, Snow, told us of the forward wagon's situation.
I became cautious at the mention of a quarrel.

"… Snow and I will go out front to confirm. Chrisse and Xiah, watch out all around and be ready to move at anytime."

Having confirmed everyone's replies, Snow and I grabbed our AK47s and ran to the front.
Looking back at the wagon, I saw Chrisse sitting on top of the canopy, holding her M700P in her hands.
That would be her watching out for her surroundings and to cover us when needed.

Me and Snow immediately arrived at the scene of problem.
There was a middle-aged man sitting against a tree trunk surrounded by Symil's group and Gomugo the client.

It was not a person recklessly challenged and then repelled by our caravan.
His appearance looked like a merchant like Gomugo–full of injuries on his body, and lots of bloodstains on his clothes.
Gomugo handed him water and he drank it frantically.

Symil noticed Snow and I and frowned, but "work is work," he started explaining.

"He's a survivor of the monsters' attacks at the open ground beyond this point at where we decided to camp. I was about to ask for details."

Seemed like just the right time.
I asked Snow, and she cured the man's injuries with magic.
The man stopped drinking and gave thanks to Snow.

The middle-aged man drank up all the water and caught his breath, and he then talks about what happened at the open ground beyond this point while trembling.

He was also a merchant. He and his fellow merchants pooled money together to hire escorts to leave Vesta.
While they were preparing to make camp at the open ground, they were

attacked by a company of approximately 50 Orges.
Furthermore, as it seemed that they didn't want to let anyone escape, they surrounded the merchants sneakily and attacked all at once.

And by some good luck, he slipped through the encirclement and narrowly escaped from death.

"O- orges, and 50, you say!?"

Symil's group was shocked.

An Orge is a high-grade variety that is stronger than an orc. Height averages at 3 meters, muscle strength also 1-2 times more. It's the strongest monster around the area.
But since the intelligence didn't differ from an orc, it was impossible for them to move in groups strategically.
The attacked man said that he thought it was nightmare that he saw, too.
It was that unnatural.

After we finished hearing the story, Snow pointed out:

"I think the wanted twin magicians are involved here. It's the same modus operandi that I heard, there's no mistake, I think."

Twin magicians—an identical pair of twin magicians who were peculiar for using fear to bind monsters to submission and organizing them to attack.
They were highly skilled as magicians, and when the two attacked together their, magic power resonated and could temporarily launch an A-minus-level attack.
They were infamous magicians who had bounties on their heads.

If so, then it was a Level IV-class adventurer's job.

As Symil's group probably knew the twin magicians, they became restless and trembled even more.

"F- fifty orges controlled by those twin magicians! It's at the level where you have to return to the highway and dispatch Dragon-Kingdom knight's order as soon as possible, isn't it?"

“But maybe there still are survivors. I think we should first scout and see the situation.”

Symil became irritated at my suggestion and glared at me.

“As if there are any survivors!”
“But if you leave like this, people who leave from the mining town like this man will be attacked again, you know.”
“So what! Isn’t getting ourselves to safety the first priority here? We don’t know when will we get attacked, so we have to get out of here right now!”
“I’m saying that since we have to get a grip of what the current situation is, it’s also for the sake of getting ourselves to safety.”

My opinion and Symil’s were the complete opposite.
Naturally, our lines of sight turned to the employer Gomugo.
He averted his eyes and wiped the sweat that was streaming down from his forehead.

“I’m just a layman about adventurer quests. I think I’ll let you professionals decide here.”

He left all the decision-making to us.

I sighed and gave a compromising proposal.

“Then first my group will take the role of scouting. If we still haven’t come back after 3 hours, then you can go back to the highway. If there is problem, we will give smoke signals; at that time, please retreat immediately.”
“….if you wanna do that, then go ahead; be my guest.”

Symil’s group also wanted information for their survival.
If we took the dangerous scouting duty, then it would probably be just what he wanted anyway.

The employer, Gomugo, also agreed with this decision.
After getting their permission, Snow and I immediately got back to our wagon.

I gave explanations to Chrisse and Xiah while moving, giving instructions to remove the horned horses from the wagon and put the saddle on.
Both of them started preparing without asking for the reason.

After removing the horned horses from the wagon, Xiah put the rein and saddle she brought just in case on them.
We had also already bought magic-prevention collars, as Xiah suggested.
I attached two collars to the belt.

I took the removed pouch and fixed it to an easy-to-handle position with the ALICE clip.

After we were done preparing the horses, Snow rode one horse with Chrisse on the back.
Xiah and I rode the other one, as I sat on the back.

Snow and Xiah were experienced in horse-riding, so I let them ride.
Me and Chrisse clung to their backs.

While we let the horses run with great haste, I explained the situation to Chrisse and Xiah.

In addition—that our objective this time is only scouting.
We decided that if there were survivors, we would aid them.
If we felt it was dangerous, we would still prioritize ourselves and retreat–even if there were survivors, for example.

At first, Snow and Chrisse were reluctant, but I wanted to prioritize their safety over anyone else's.
I expressed that feeling, convincing them not to be reckless.
Even if we said we wanted to save people, there's no meaning if were to die in doing so. The enemies were Level IV class. No matter how cautious we were, we wouldn't overdo it.

And we kept galloping for about 30 minutes, and in a little, we arrived at the targeted open ground.

“This is terrible…”

I got off the horned horse and looked around.
The open ground we intended to camp on was about the size of a school ground.
5, no, 6 wagons were destroyed like they met a tornado. Wheels and axles were broken, wagons were on their sides, and the canopies were full of holes.

But the mystery here was that there was not even one corpse.
The cargo on the wagons as well were almost gone.

Xiah held her AK47 in one hand, carefully observing the traces and footprints that were on the ground.

“…..Looks like the horned horse and human corpses were taken, as well as the cargo. I think the chance that the twin magicians were involved is high, as madam Snow predicted.”
“I could understand if it’s cargo, but even human and horned horse’s corpses?”
“It’s food for the ogres. Ogres are unintelligent so terror and reward — in this case it’s food, if they are given food then they will obey. It’s the method the twin magicians usually use.”

I understand what Xiah was saying.
In other words, “*carrot and stick*,” huh.
They took the merchant’s cargo for themselves and gave corpses for orges and monsters. Efficiency shitheads.

“They just attacked their prey, so we can probably pass through this main road safely. But if it’s just now, then there are still a lot of their traces left, so it wouldn’t be hard to find their hideout … What do we do, young master?”

Xiah spoke in a manner like there was something she wanted to say.
Not just Xiah, but Snow and Chrisse also had a strong light in their eyes.
Of course, I can’t stand this wickedness before my eyes either.
The enemies were 50 ogres and 2 magicians. To be honest, they were strong enemies.
But if it was us, then we could probably do it. If it seemed dangerous, then

we would fight from afar, shower them with bullets with the AK and decrease their numbers while retreating.

I turned around to face the girls.

“Okay then let’s find their hideout and strike them.”

They were all fired up at this decision.
Eyes burning with anger, I declared.

“–Alright! It’s battle time”

————————–

This time, I put too much effort into explaining the hand grenade and wrote too much …
But it was fun, so it’s alright!
I was thinking of writing about explosives afterward, aren’t there anthropomorphizations of TNT, RDX, and C4?
Main character cheating, hold bomb and explode, heroine get stripped naked, that kind of new story, someone please write it.

And this time I used “Weapon and explosive – Nightmare mechanisms Illustrated, by Kobayashi Motofumi” and some other documents for reference for the hand grenade.

Chapter 061 – Twin Magicians

After I got the okay for the hideout attack from the girls, I immediately prepared.
I thought about tying the horned horses' rein to a tree, but there was the danger of them getting attacked by the other monsters, so I let them be.

I change the AK47's safety switch to semi-automatic.
I pulled the cocking handle to load a cartridge into the chamber.

Chrisse also pulled the bolt back and forth.
She pushed the 7.62mmx51 NATO cartridge into the chamber.

Everyone tied the combat boots' laces tightly again, checked the condition of the combat protectors, and wore the eye-protection gear.

"Formation is the same as we practiced, Shia is the vanguard, then Snow and I, and at the back is Chrisse. This time, the objective is locate the twin magicians' current hideout and suppress the enemies. Try your best to not fight the monsters that we will probably meet; take detour if you can, because it'd be bad if the enemies were to hear the gunfire."
"Leave it to me. I'll advance the chosen road with the least possible chance to meet monsters. Moreover, when push comes to shove, I'll just kill them silently with my knife."

Shia nodded and tapped the knife that was hanging from her hips 2 and 3 times.

"This time, I plan to defeat those magicians so that there won't be anymore victims, but if there are survivors, then we will prioritize saving them. But of course, our safety is still the first priority."

I wanted to create the Legion corps to save troubled people or people in need of help for the future.
I haven't reached the level required to set one up yet, but regardless of that,

I reconfirmed with everyone that we would come to help if there were people in trouble or people who were looking for help.

Snow and the others nodded, showing their agreement.
I had truly good wives and friend.
I nodded back and signaled.

“Then we’re going.”

With that as the starting signal, everyone pushed through to the center of the forest.

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With her proud [I can’t be caught in a surprise attack, even in the forest at night] remark, Shia, on lookout duty, noticed the presence of monsters before anyone else, and with the support of Body Strengthening on her body, she brought them down with knives (probably out of consideration to avoid disturbing everyone’s sleep with gunshot sounds, since it was late at night).

She had a much higher presence-sensing ability than the rest of us.
That did not apply only to monsters; it was also useful on pursuers or traps.

She immediately found the trap.
A metallic bear trap.

“Did a hunter living near here set up this trap?”
“I can’t say for sure who set this up, but a live body caught in this would easily get its leg crushed. Take care to step only on where my footprints are, okay?”

Following Shia’s indication, we walked around the trap, taking care to not step outside of her footprints.
We went further ahead and found a clapper linked to a tied string.

If you got caught on the string, the clapper would sound—or so they pretend, but this one's a dummy. A real magic boundary had been set up. It was the same type as the one that was triggered we broke into the Vlad house.

Looking at the clapper, it seemed to be a trap to get us caught in the magic boundary, as it was set up in a difficult-to-see location.

"I'll acknowledge their efforts, but the clapper's positioning is too obvious. They might as well be advertising that [we are hiding another trap]."

Shia cracked an insult as if she was some kind of critic and defused the magic boundary in under three minutes.
Even for Snow, it still took over 5 minutes, as expected from her.

"Since the magic boundary is there, their hideout must be nearby. Everyone, brace yourselves."

Snow and the girls each gave their responses.
We went further into the forest.

While we were on this search, we didn't encounter any monsters.
Had the monsters already been hunted to exhaustion by the ogres, too?
It *was* convenient for us.

About 30 minutes later—50 meters from where we were–the forest gave way to a spreading empty land.
It was approximately half as wide as the open space from earlier.
There was a cave in there, and beyond that, it was overgrown in more trees.

At roughly the middle of the empty land, there was a bonfire, where ogres were deliciously eating corpses and dead-horned horses.

They numbered about 41-42.
It didn't reach 50.

"…….!"

Chrisse covered her mouth.
It must've been a horrible sight for her, who had the best eye out of the people here.
But we couldn't afford not to scout it out.

The side of the cavern was stacked with what looked to be pillaged cargo.
Two people covered entirely in totally magician-looking robes were checking the contents of the cargo while having a friendly chat.

Those two were probably the twin magicians.
We checked for survivors again.
There was a woman bound and gagged, trembling beside the cargo.
No doubt that she was a surviving merchant.

Because of the distance, I couldn't discern anything other than that she was a woman with my eyesight.
Her age was probably slightly over 20.

The men forcibly made the woman stand and then disappeared inside the cavern.

(*Those sleazebags…!*)

I could clearly imagine what was going to happen to that woman after seeing this.
There was no time. I immediately drafted a plan.

We brought our heads together and spoke in quiet whispers.

(First I'll take the left, Snow and Shia will take the right, and we'll clear the ogres away. Chrisse, go right in front of the cavern entrance where you can see inside. If the men took the woman hostage, make them eat 7.62 mm.)

Snow, Chrisse and Shia nodded with a serious look.

We all spread out to the left and right.
I did call it *spread out*, but we were separated for no more than 10 meters.
We took up positions away from the front of the cavern in order to ensure Chrisse's firing line.

Looking towards Chrisse, she took up a pose on her knees—a kneeling-shooting position.

I changed over from semi-auto to full-auto mode.
I raised my left hand to where everyone could see, and I started counting.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1—

“Go!”

By supporting our bodies with Body Strengthening, Snow, Shia and I jumped out from the thickets and opened fire on the ogres while they were huddled around the bonfire.

[**!!!!!!!!???????**]

The ogres turned their heads toward us in surprise.
But they were too late.
With me from the left and Snow & Shia from the right, we fired, making the shape of the letter X.
The ogres momentarily hesitated on which way to turn, and because of that, they were defenseless and fell prey to a mountain load of 7.62mm Russian shot.

But because of their robustness that’s superior to orcs, they didn’t die easily even after receiving those.

[**OOOOO**o0**OOOOOOO**o0**OOO**!!!!]

They roared even as they took a shot or two and charged towards me.

I strengthened my body—my eyes in particular.
Just like how I once defeated the goblins, I changed my aim to their heads.

I had overwhelming firepower, unlike with the revolver.
Because of the great power, the ogre’s thick skull was smashed on a direct hit to the head, splattering grey matter everywhere.
The magazine change was also smooth and without pause.

Just when I used up the second magazine, the ogres that were coming to attack me had been annihilated.
Likewise, Snow and Shia also defeated theirs.
Timewise, it all took under one minute.

—silence fell.

We installed fresh magazines taken from our magazine pouches and turned the muzzle towards the cavern's entrance.
Snow, Shia and I nodded to one another and slowly walked, encircling the cavern's entrance.

Three more minutes passed, and the two magician-looking men from earlier showed up with the woman as hostage.
Each had the left and right halves of their faces tattooed in black ink.
If you brought them together, they would make single pattern.

Other than the tattoos, their faces and stature were identical.
These two men were now unmistakably identified as the twin magicians.

The man with tattooes on the right half of his face held a knife at the woman, using her as a shield.
The woman didn't seem to have been raped; but her face was swollen, likely because of being hit.

"Who the hell are you!? How did you take down all these ogres without even using magic!?" x2
The men asked in unison.
"It doesn't matter who we are, does it? Rather than that, it's you—- wait, we don't know your names yet."
"To not know about us—ignorance is sin! We are the twin magicians who are famous 'round this neighborhood; when the two of us use our magic together, our power rises! Now you'd do well to see our magic and carve our names to your souls as it—gaaaah" x2

—BANG!

"Gya**aaa**ah!"

The enemy's speech was answered with bullets.

Chrisse fired the M700P, hitting the shoulder of the man who was holding the hostage with a [7.62mm×51 NATO bullet]
As the hostage slipped away and the man became dumbfounded, one of his legs was shot.

“GU**AAAA**AH!!!”

The two men agonized because of pain they had never felt before.
Chrisse relentlessly fired one more bullet at each of the men.

I raised my hand, signalling her to stop.
Together with Shia, we rushed up to the agonizing men and kicked them in the jaw.
The two men lost their consciousnesses quickly.

Their legs and shoulders were bleeding heavily; the bullets have pierced right through.
We attached our magic-prevention collars precautiously and tied them up.
Afterwards, Shia treated their shoulders and legs.
Here, we could take it easy and not kill them. Because we could take them back alive, they could be dragged out before the law and make up for their crimes.

Snow rushed over to the cowering woman and called her.
She took out a knife and cut the rope binding her arms.

“Please be at ease, we’re here to help. The monsters have all been exterminated, so you’ll be alright.”
“T-, ttttt-, thank y—”

Overcome with fear, the woman must have found it hard to say her thanks while she was shivering.
Snow paid it no mind, as she offered her a canteen and rubbed her back to calm her down. Then she applied healing magic on her face.
Thanks to the healing magic’s power, the bruises on her face cleanly disappeared.

After making sure of her state, I waved to Chrisse.
She came along to check whether there are any more survivors, then I gave everyone instructions.

“Shia, you go back first and tell Gomugo-san and the others that everything’s fine. When you’re there, take a horned horse and come back here. We’re going to be carrying these twin magicians with us. Chrisse and I will check the perimeter for any more survivors. Snow will stay next to her until she calms down.”

Having received their instructions, everyone started to move.
Thus we were able to safely rescue the woman and successfully capture the object of reward, the twin magicians.

Chapter 062 – Arrival at Mining Town Vesta

We were waiting in front of a cave, which was the Twin Magicians' hideout, for Shia to come back from calling Gomugo and the others.
To assure them that we did defeat the magicians, Shia brought with her ornaments belonging to them and a portion of the goods the merchants were dealing in.

We tied up the defeated magicians, blindfolded them, and put them to sleep. Just in case, we separated the two and restrained them in different locations.
The woman we saved was tired and thus was sleeping with her head on Snow's lap.

Even while she was lending her lap, Snow kept her ears listening in all directions.
Chrisse was watching out all around her, just like Snow.

I left the girls with the lookout and went collecting the Ogre fangs to exchange for rewards.
With a knife, I cut off the long canines at the root one ogre at a time.

There were also unrecoverable ones, having been smashed by an AK-47's 7.62mm Russian Shot rounds.

Once I roughly finished, I went back to Snow and Chrisse.
The fangs were put in a leather bag that was hanging from my waist.
I joined the girls on the lookout.

"But we were able to kill them more easily than expected, huh?"

While keeping vigilant, I started some small talk.
I gave an impression of how we fought for real this time.

"Could it be that we're, like, pretty strong ?"
"Yeah, I think we're pretty strong, especially since Chrisse-chan's sniper

rifle is a menace to magicians.They can't sense magic from it at all, and it has enough attack power to give an instant death from over a long distance. You're almost at a certain-death level as a magician-killer."
[Lute-oniichan and Snow-oneechan are strong, too.]

Chrisse wrote on the mini-blackboard, while she was embarrassed.

It's true even now that as long as the number is reasonable, we can take most of the opponents down easily.
But personally, I wanted a little more firepower.

(When this quest is over, maybe I should make a squad-support weapon.)
While I was idly thinking, Shia returned with a horned horse in tow.

"Shia, thanks for the hard word. How's Gomugo-san and everyone?"
"Thanks to the merchants cargo that young master told me to bring along, I was able to make them believe easily."
"That's good then. Are Gomugo-san and everyone coming to this open ground ?"
"Yes, they've come with me. They were extremely shocked when they heard the news of us defeating the Twin Magicians."

Maybe Shia recalled the faces of those guys when they heard her report or something, because the corner of her mouth raised as she grinned to herself.
It looked like she had a lot of fun.
If I could have, I'd like to see it too.

"Understood. Well, then what are we even waiting for? Let's go!"

We woke the woman up and had her walk with us.
I loaded the group of defeated magicians onto the horse's back like luggage.

After I had Shia burn away the corpses of the ogres, we returned to the open ground where Gomugo-san was waiting.

The woman we rescued met with the merchant who informed us of the danger, then she bursted out crying.
Probably from the relief of seeing an acquaintance's face.

Her clothes were dirty, so we gave her Snow's, who has a similar physique.
We also gave her hot water and a towel to wipe herself, and we suggested to her to change her clothes inside of our wagon.

The merchant tried to reward us with money, but we declined.
We didn't do it, because we wanted a reward or something.

Also, their cargo was still left in front of the cave, but we could only leave it by then.
That's because we didn't have the wagons and people to transport it.

The merchant seemed to be returning to his home in the Mining Town Vesta for the moment.
For the time being, we put the woman we rescued on our wagon to carry her.
The Mining Town is about one day away from here.
We did have lots of space, and our group was an all-girl gang besides me, so she shouldn't have been on guard.

However, we of course couldn't set off right away and thus made camp for the day as we have planned.
The Twin Magicians were kept bound on different locationsand surrounded by earth walls made with magic just in case. Furthermore, we used magic to put them into a state of deep sleep.
With this, they weren't expected to wake up for two days.

Gomugo-san went about as usual, and we told him that we'll do the night watch, too.
It'd be troublesome later on if we owned something to the type of people like Symil.

Symil took the trouble to come to our camp and make some late excuse, like "Hmph, looks like they're weaker than rumoured. Even we could defeat them ourselves."
It was a pain in the ass to deal with, so I just ignored him.

The next day.
We finally arrived at Mining Town Vesta safely.

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Mining Town Vesta is as the name says, a town that mines for ores.
It seemed that they mined a whole variety of ores; there was black smoke rising here and there and men with developed muscles passing by.

Because we arrived during the evening, I wanted to stop by the livery stable and go straight to the inn — but there was no way we could do that.

First, we parted with the woman we rescued and the merchant here.
Seems they had acquaintances they can depend on.
I was given a bunch of thanks in the end.

We promised to meet with Gomugo the morning 3 days later in front of livery stable, then we parted.

Next, we headed to the guild to hand over the captured Twin Magicians.
They were wanted by the guild, after all.

“Lute-kun, let me carry one person ?”
[I’ll help too]
“No, madams. Please leave it to this servant.”

The wives and Shia offered to help carry the two guys, but…

“It’s okay, I can carry these guys alone.”

There was no way I could have let my dear wives and Shia, who is also a girl, embrace and carry these trash bags.
I had to show my manly spirit here and whip my tired body – the result of not having been used to moving via a wagon.
With Body Strengthening magic, I heldboth of the ropes tied to the guys on each side, then I recklessly lifted them up and walked.

Luckily, the two guys were already put to sleep, so they weren't struggling; and since the distance between the stable and the guild was short, we managed to arrive before my magic ran out.

A person in charge of the guild confirmed their looks and special traits.
It looked like there was no mistake that the captured guys are the infamous Twin Magicians.
100 gold coins per guy — it's about 10-million yen.

We got 200 gold coins in one go.

Level II and III adventurers completed a Level IV quest, but because it was so sudden, we kept silent about it.

As we were not used to traveling, camping, and night watch — except for Shia — we were defeated by the fatigue and thus we stayed at the high-grade inn inside the guild for that day.
We got 2 rooms for Shia, and Snow, Chrisse and I.

After we finished dinner in our rooms, we immediately went to bed.
It has been a while since traveling for quests that I got to stay under one roof with my two cute wives, but as expected, there was no drive at all.

I fell into the bed being sandwiched by Snow & Chrisse. With cute wives in my arms and their sweet smells, I dived into a peaceful slumber.
In the end, we slept into afternoon of the next day like we were dead.

Chapter 063 – Sightseeing at Mining Town Vesta

"……(Fu)gaa~"

As I opened my eyes, I made a stupid sound.
By seeing the faintly leaked light from the slatted shutter, I knew that the sun had risen up.

I raised up my head to that faint light, which confirmed the sleeping figures in Snow and Chrisse who were using my arms as pillow substitutes.

On my right arm was Snow.
Maybe because she untied her ponytail, her atmosphere and impression felt different than usual–changed from an energetic feeling to a quiet one. The two sides of Snow were both charming to me.

On my left arm was Chrisse.
Rather than using my arm as a pillow, her head was almost rested on my chest while she was sleeping. I've become a hugging pillow. Her sleeping face was more childish than usual, and her absolutely at-ease expression was lovely.

I took out my hands gently as to avoid waking them up, but —

"Lute-kun?"
"Onii, chan."
"…… Good morning to both of you."

As expected, it's impossible.
In the first place, rather than saying they were asleep, they were closer to dozing off, it seemed. That's why they realized my movement and woke up.

Because we already woke up, we raised our bodies and got out of the bed. By the time I opened the windows, the sun was already at its peak, and the street was already active.

“Looks like it’s already past noon.”
“Can’t be helped, because it’s been a while since we could sleep properly without worrying about night watch.”
[It is just as Snow-oneechan says.]

But the departure was only two days away…
Until then, we had to buy the necessary food, which is consumables for a 5-day travel to the capital, and load them onto the wagon. We couldn’t just around in the room all day like this.

“First, let’s meet up with Shia, have late breakfast and lunch at the same time, then go shopping in preparation for tomorrow.”

My two wives agreed with this proposal.

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We met up with Shia, who stayed in the room next door.
I told her, “Let’s go buy the necessary things before the day after tomorrow, then –”

“If it’s just that, then I will do it. Young master, madams, please take it easy.”
“But, to leave it all to Shia is …”
“What are you saying? I’m the young master’s servant; if you say it like that, then I’ll lose my face, you know?”

It’s like the president does the same work together with employees, huh?
It’s true that if that happens, the employee will be put in an awkward situation.

I accepted her offer and gave her money. I gave her more than enough, just in case.
While I was at it, I also told her that it's okay to buy anything that she likes.

Shia shook her head in a reserved manner, but I still had a lot of money from the Twin Magicians' bounty.
That's why I told her not to mind it.

And as if we were free for the day, we decided our plans for the day while having a meal in the bar-cum-cafeteria on the 1st floor.
It'd be a waste to stay in the room, so we decided to go sightseeing around Mining Town.

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I walked around Mining Town arm in arm with Snow and Chrisse.
There were lots of young muscular men, maybe because it was a mining town.
They emitted a clear killing intent when seeing me walk arm in arm with two cute girls.

I know how you feel.
If I were in your shoes, I would yell [Real-lifers should just explode!] in my head, too.

"Hey hey Chrisse-chan, isn't this pendant cute?"
[Yes, it's very cute. This ring is, too.]

There were common shops in the mining town, but there were also lots of open-air ones where they sold by the roadside on a spread-out cloth.
The local specialties, such as metal accessories, blades, and metal ornaments, were laid out in large numbers. It seemed that they were put on display by young artisans wanting to raise their skills and earn pocket

money.
Like a flea market in my previous life.

The open-air stall where we stopped by was one like a silver-accessory shop in my previous life, which was staffed by a young craftsman who was lining up his own work for sale.

The young Dragon Race artisan put up a businesslike smile.

“Please feel free to hold it in your hand. I definitely won’t force you to buy it.”

Receiving the offer, Snow and Chrisse let go of my arm and looked at them earnestly.
Meanwhile, I stood there like a scarecrow and waited for them until they were done. This is another one of a husband’s resourcefulness.

While I was idly waiting for them, two merchant-like people passed by my side.
I inadvertently heard their conversation.

“Oi, don’t you think it’s been strange lately in the outskirts of town?”
“I do; I do. Especially since I haven’t even seen ogres lately, much less small monsters. My family says “[Isn’t this an omen for something strange?]”
“I hope it’s nothing…”

The merchants spoke with worried faces and voices, then disappeared into the crowd.

(*You don’t have to be so worried, since the Twin Magicians leading the ogres are no longer there.*)

Because the Twin Magicians gathered and organized ogres, the other monsters were hunted down in droves; the result is that they disappeared from the forest.
Since we’ve apprehended them, the forest will surely return to normality in time.

While I was thinking that, Snow came while carrying a simple pendant made of metal chains in her hand.
She stretched it over her neck to show me.

“What do you think, Lute-kun?”
“It suits you well. Matches your hair color.”
“Ehehe, thanks.”

My trousers were pulled, and I turned around.
Chrisse was putting golden earrings on her ears.
The earrings were not inlaid with gems or magic stones, but it was a beautiful type with detailed craftsmanship.

[What about me?]
“Chrisse’s match you. too.”
[Thank you very much.]

Being praised, Chrisse also blushed bashfully.

Snow seemed to like silver, simple ones, while Chrisse preferred golden, beautiful ones.
I jotted it down as a memo in my mind.

“They really fit you both. I’m sure the accessories would surely be happy too, to be worn by the two of you.”

The youngster kept glancing at me.

“No, if they’re worn by you two, then to the creator, there’s really nothing happier than this.”

He threw more glances at me.
I got it, I got it.
This is where I had to show my resourcefulness.

“I’ll take this; how much for two ?”
“Thank you for your continued patronage! The actual price for one is 1 silver and 2 large copper coins; but because you want to buy 2, 2 silver coins will do.”

About 20,000 yen, huh?
If I think of it as a fee to know their tastes, then it's cheap.

I handed 2 silver coins to the youngster.

I put the accessories on their ears and neck, and they smiled happily.

"Thanks Lute-kun, I'll treasure it."
[Thank you, onii-chan. I too will treasure it forever.]

Their smiles were *priceless*.
Then we got back to walking around the town.

We stopped by a place like a food market to take a break and eat snacks.
This town unexpectedly had as many sweets as the amount of muscular guys there.

We ate the representative of all the sweets: the steamed bun.
Uncooked dough that got mixed with beans that have been cooked with sugar and then steamed. It's similar to steamed bread and steamed cake in my previous world.
"This is the first time I'm eating this. The sweet beans are delicious."
"Snow, you're okay with sweet beans?"
"Yeah, I'm okay."

She looked okay as she said and kept eating heartily with a happy face.
In the previous world, I heard that there is no concept of sweet beans overseas and that there are people bad with them, so they can't eat Japan's red-bean paste.

"Chrisse, how is it? Delicio– Chrisse?"

I stopped talking midway and stared at Chrisse without thinking.
She wore a serious expression, like a researcher dealing with an dangerous object, while eating the steamed bun.

[Indeed, the sweetness of the bean compensated for the dullness of the dough. But I think instead of just adding sugar to the bean, it would be even more delicious if we also added salt and such to make the sweetness stand

out. On a scale of 10 points, I gave this 5.24 points.]
“I.. I see.”

The points are detailed!
As expected of the demon race.
The race that loves sweet to the point of boasting, “Wheat is not used for bread; it’s used to make cake.”
She even hired Malcom-san, the exclusive chef, just to make sweets.
Maybe because of that, she’s dead-serious about sweets and snacks.

Her eyes spoke “Sweets aren’t a game.”

I’ve done well currying favour from this master with sweets ….

After we were done eating steamed buns, we went back.
Because the sun was about to set.
We planned to have dinner at the same place we had lunch: the inn’s first floor.
Lunch was delicious there, so I guessed that there would be no problem.

“Ah, my bad. I forgot to ask Shia for one necessary thing for tomorrow. It’s fine to do it tomorrow, but I’ll just go buy it and come back quickly, so won’t you go back first ?”
[Then let’s go buy together.]
“No, it’s really nothing important. I’m fine alone. So you two go back, first.”
“If you say so, Lute-kun.”

As they turned their heads to look back at me, I pushed their backs forcefully, urging them to go back to the inn.
I wish I could have fooled them a little better, but I had no talent in the art of conversation.

After I sent them off, I headed to a shop, which I guessed was the precious metal shop, during the sightseeing in the afternoon.

The goal was the marriage bracelets for them.

Currently, the marriage bracelets they’re wearing are plain ones I made from magic liquid metal. But as expected, I couldn’t have accepted those as marriage bracelets myself.

Of course those two were satisfied with just that…
So this was completely for my own indulgence.

I secretly took quests alone from the guild and saved up money.
A total of 6 gold coins — about 600,000 yen.
In short, it's about the same cost of making two wash toilets.

1 item was only 3 gold coins, so it was probably fine for display.

On the outside, the shop was about as big as a convenience store; but it was prettier than other shops, so it left an impression.
After I passed through the door, an old Dragon Race clerk with complete white hair welcomed me.

"Welcome. How can I help you?"
"I want to give my two wives marriage bracelets; can you show me some?"
"For a wife ? 2 even ? Now that's some manliness."

The old clerk smiled pleasantly after he heard "2 wives."
He looked like a good guy.
I told him my budget and their preferences, then I had him show me a few.

Snow's taste is silver color, simple design.
Chrisse's taste is gold color, fancy design.

Among the ones shown to me, there were two that caught my attention.
Snow's was a simple, silver bracelet inlaid with bluish-white magic stones and gems.
Chrisse's was a fancy design made up of small gold chains, attached with red magic stones and gems.

Each of the magic stones had already been charged to be able to fire magic once.
The old clerk recommended it, saying that they'll be happy with magic-stone-equipped bracelets that have practical use, since this is a dangerous world.

It's certainly practical, and the design seemed to be something they'd like.
Furthermore, since they're also marriage bracelets, they come with

bracelets for the man with the same design, so at 3 gold coins a pair, they were well within my budget.

The man's bracelets were only treated as accessories, so they didn't come with magic stones or gems. They were just plain marriage bracelets.
But those two would probably like these.

"These ones, please."
"Thank you very much. We'll throw them in this case as a bonus."

I took the old clerk on his offer and accepted the case.
I handed over the 6 gold I saved to the clerk.

After about a few minutes later, he handed me the bracelets in something that looked like paulownia boxes.
I firmly secured them in my pocket so that those two wouldn't find out.

"I hope you bring your wives along next time."
"Yes, absolutely. I'll take them along next time."

I once again said my thanks and then left the shop.

Timewise, it took me about one hour. Anymore and I'd have been worrying them.
As dusk drawn closer, I hurriedly went through the alleyway, heading back to the inn.
As I walked, I lightly tapped the marriage bracelet inside the pocket.

"Guess I will give it to those two after finishing this quest. No, I might as well throw a surprise party and give these to them when I get back home, I guess?"

Thinking about Snow's and Chrisse's surprised and delightful faces, I couldn't help but grin.

Chapter 064 – Small Magic Stone

We departed from Mining Town Vesta on the next day, just before noon.
I had guessed it was about 10 in the morning.

The road on this side was clear of forestry, as it exposed part of the mountainside bare.
The lumber was probably used as fuel or material.

But after an hour of traveling passed, it led to a pathway that went through the woods.
We were on the back of the merchant caravan, as we kept watch all around.
We might have been lucky, but we managed to have a peaceful journey without encountering a single monster.

The first problem happened on the second day after we left the mining town, when we reached a camping ground.

When we reached it, we noticed that there were two or three destroyed wagons in horrible state.

We got down from the wagon and checked the situation.

“Oi oi, so there’s someone like the Twin Magicians on this side, too?”
“Probably not humans but monsters. See this? These are bite marks. It’s likely from a day ago.”

Shia made her guess from the state of the wagons.

“Oi, you lot, there might still be monsters looming to hurt us as we go forward, so we’re going out to exterminate them right away. Don’t interfere.”

Symil said so and led his group.

“They’re Level II and have still done it. We Level III ranks should be able to do it with ease.”

Looks like since we defeated the Twin Magicians and Orges too easily, they were under the misunderstanding that even they could do it.
And their eyes were radiating for the reward money.

“I’m just saying, but we have A- and B+ magicians; that’s why we were able to defeat them. Your no-magician 3-man group better not be reckless.”
“Annoying! Shut up! I won’t let you snatch my prey! You lot shut up and wait here!”

Like that, Symil’s group made a disastrous scene and disappeared into the forest to search for the monsters.

“Lute-kun, what do we do ?”

Looking back, I saw that Gomugo and everyone were looking at me with anxious faces.
Since Symil’s group has already went in, we had to ensure their safety.

“Until they return, you should be ready to move at any time. Snow and Chrisse, protect Gomugo-san, and Shia and I will go around to check the surroundings to see if there are any survivors.”

Everyone replied to me and proceeded to carry out my instructions.
In the worst case that they wouldn’t return by tomorrow morning, we might have to have spent one night there. And thus we maybe would be better off discussing rotation nightwatch by then with just us.

I silently decided that I would discuss it later while we were eating dinner or something.

Shia and I, with full equipment and AK47, went around checking for the damage and survivors.

We went one round around the forest near the open ground, but there was nothing we had to be specially vigilant for.
Not even survivors’ footprints or traces.

We went back to the open ground and signaled to Snow & Chrisse that there was no problem.
The girls then said to Gomugo's still-anxious group, "looks like no danger in the surroundings," as their faces relaxed a little.

Next, Shia and I confirmed the conditions of the destroyed wagons.
They were common wooden wagons.
Axles were broken, and even the wheels were broken in half.
Even an amateur could tell that repair was impossible.

The loaded cargo was safe, it seemed.
The contents seemed to be raw materials that were bought from Mining Town Vesta.
Just by one look, we couldn't tell if it was iron ore, precious metal, or something else.

"……."

Shia stared seriously at the wreckage of the destroyed wagons with a stern expression.
With one knee on the ground, she picked up something that looked like a jigsaw puzzle.

"…….Young master, look at this."
"Which one?"

Thereupon being told so, I went next to her and took a look.
It was one part of the wagon that she has been fiddling with since a while ago.

"Here, do you see these sharp bite marks?"

Certainly just like Shia point out, there were marks to suggest that it was bitten by sharp fangs.

"I see. So what's the problem?"
"Young master, look closely. This is the same part of the wagon, yet the bite marks are this close to each other; it's like they intentionally bit them a second time next to the first one. Why do you think they would purposely

do so?"
"Maybe it was done by a monster. I mean, there's no way I would know."

"Also, these burn marks……if my guess is right, it's something very bad."
"Something bad as in, this disastrous scene was caused by a dragon or something?"

Indeed, there were bite marks and burn marks.
I was kinda sure that it was attacked by a group of Orges and other monsters. The burn mark, too, came from the lamp, or so I thought.

"Could it be have been red dragons ?"

Red dragon is the representative of monsters, the generic dragon that has wings, flies in the sky, and spews flames.
Very rarely will one or two red dragons stray away from the herd and attack the town or country.

Defeating red dragons was one of the requirements to create a legion.
And in the demon continent and other continents, there were varieties superior to red dragons.

"No, my guess is more than th–!?"

Not only Shia and I reacted.
Everyone here shuddered, too.

A roar echoed from afar.
It was from something absolutely strong.

The direction the voice came from aligned with the direction Symil's group went in.
After I put myself on guard for a while, the ground trembled and I heard the sound of trees falling down.
I unconsciously broke a cold sweat and swallowed my saliva.
I flipped the safety switch off my AK-47.
It shifted to full automatic.
I pulled the cocking handle and loaded a cartridge into the chamber.

Not only me but Shia and Snow & Chrisse also.

The ground-trembling distance got closer.
From the forest, I saw silhouettes of people running for their lives.
It's Symil!

He's soaked with sweat and tears that were flowing, and he was holding his right arm.
The right hand that held the proud sword was gone.
While holding it with his left hand, he ran back here with a pale face.

"He- eeelp!"

Instantly…
His upper body was then decimated.
Blood spurt out from his lower half of the torso, and it twitched violently as it fell over.

"!!!"

I bit down my lips and averted my eyes from the overly shocking scene.

"Young master, you can't look away. We don't know what will come next."
"So..sorry. But–!"

Due to that overly miserable death, I felt something sour coming up my throat.
I held it back and lift my face up.

In an instant, the monster that ate Symil leapt into the sky.

[OoOoooooooOOoOooOoooo0!!!]

Dancing high in the sky, it roared as if to intimidate us.
Its overall length is about 10 meters.
Sharp scales that seemed that they would cut your hand if touched were covered all over its body, and its wide wings on its back let it fly freely in the sky.

And there was the different trait from normal dragons — 2 heads, it once again emitted a roar that would rumble even your core.

[OoOoooooooOOoOooOooooO!!!]

“Hey hey hey, what the hell is that …”

I raised my voice unintentionally.
Shia whispered with an unpleasant face.

“Looks like my prediction is head-on. It’s the red dragon’s superior species: the twin dragon …”

Because the dragon was here, that must be why all the monsters disappeared!
I thought for sure it was because of the Twin Magicians and the Orges; I was mistaken.

As if we were answering to her, it landed on the ground in a position in front of us, and its two pairs of eyes fixed in on us.

“–! Snow, Chrisse! You two evacuate Gomugo-san’s group! Shia and I will shoot it to attract its attention!”

On my command, the girls moved out.

Bang! Bababababababababang!

I unloaded the AK47’s full auto.
But I couldn’t even do so much as put a scratch on the scales of that monster called the twin dragon.
Even so, Shia and I still kept shooting to draw its attention.

One of the heads of the twin dragon looked at us like annoying pest and breathed in as if it was inhaling a large quantity of air.

“!? Young master! Breath incoming! Dodge!”
“…..!!”

A thunderous roar emitted from one of the twin dragon's head, then fire started coming out.
On Shia's point-out, I immediately enhanced my body with magic and jumped away from that spot.

Its power is almost many times over the flamethrower in my previous world.
Its range was then known to be about 50 meters, because as we ran away, the two horned horses turned into living torches.

With great momentum, the horses fell; everything on the wagon fell out to the ground as well.
One barrel of magic liquid metal hit a tree trunk and got smashed up.
But there was silver lining in the dark cloud; the spare cartridge got thrown out too, and thus they didn't get burned by the flames.

"Lute-kun! Shia-san!"

As if answering to Snow's worried voice, both of the twin dragon's heads turned to look at her.
Gomugo-san's group was still in the middle of running into the forest.

"This damn skink lizard!"

I got furious at the twin dragons, which were baring its fangs at my wives.
I swapped the magazine to armor-piercing bullets and fired — but as expected, it was repelled by the scales, therefore, ineffective!

This time, the other head repeated the inhaling action.
Snow and everyone still haven't gotten into the forest. But considering the power of that flame, I don't even think the trees would block it even if they got in.

'As I thought, instead of personal equipment, I should have prioritized fire power, huh!?'

But it was then too late for regret.
I reached for the second armor-piercing ammo magazine.
My fingertip touched a different thing.
It was the prototype "frag grenade" for defense!

I pulled the grenade's pin with my teeth, as I was still clenching the lever I used body-enhancing magic to support my body. I threw the grenade towards the nose of the twin dragon. The effective radius was 15 meters; Snow's group was farther away than that, so it wasnot dangerous.

An exploding sound.
At the same time, the twin dragon then roared in pain for the first time.

[OoOoooooooOOoOooOoO!!!]

Its breath got pointed down to the ground and it suffered like it was self-destructing.
Luckily, the fragment crushed one of its eyes.

"Everyone! Escape to the forest without looking back! Don't look around; run to the very back of it!"

As I issued the command, we ran towards the forest with Shia and me as as the rear guard.
Midway, my leg kicked on the stuff scattered from the wagon.
As I recognized what it was, I reflexively picked it up.

"Young master! What are you doing!? Quick!"
"Sorry!"

After screaming due to the pain it received for the first time, the twin dragon fainted from it for a while and showed no action.
In the end, I heard a howl painted with hatred in the background.

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While the wagon was moving, I made hand grenades to kill time.
It's small equipment like protectors and sacks, … I thought I'd only make only one like other accessories, but to think that it'd be useful like this …

We ran into the forest and hid inside a cave we found.
Since the sun already set, we had to use magic to light up the inside the cave.
We carefully used plants to cover the cave as so to not let light leak out.

I switched the AK47's safety switch on and sat down to let my tired body rest.
I wiped my sweat with my hand, and I got the canteen fixed by ALICE clip to my mouth.

"…..Do you think that if we hide here and the twin dragon can't find us, it will give up after a while and go away ?"
"Not happening."

It wasn't direct as to who was the addressee, but Shia replied in response.
She drank from the canteen, too, and wiped her mouth.

"Dragons in general have high pride. Wounded by an inferior being, that dragon definitely wouldn't give up on chasing until it has killed young master."

For real?
It's just like the Sankebetsu-bear incident at Hokkaido in my previous world.
That one too persistently chased humans, ate a number of them, and finally got hunted down … was it ?

As I was trying to remember the incident I vaguely have knowledge of, the client Gomugo started shouting.

"Y- ou imprudently wounded the dragon; because of that, we got chased into this awkward situation! Even the goods are lost, what are you going to do?!"

Other employees too were silently blaming me with gloomy eyes.

"……I think Lute-kun's decision was accurate. If he didn't use the exploding-magic tool that time, then we'd all have been roasted by the dragon's flames already. Do you still mind that ?"
"Gu…"

After hearing Snow's explanation, Gomugo and every one faced their blaming eyes downward.
Due to hearing Snow pointing out the fact, their heads must have cooled down a bit.

[Anyway, we should calm down and analyze the situation now.]
"That's right. Even if we blame each other now, nothing will come out of it. First, we gotta confirm the situation."

Snow, Chrisse, and Shia nodded.
Gomugo's group maintained silence to not get in the way.

"First, Shia, that is a twin dragon, right ? I remember you said it's a red dragon's superior species."
"That's right. It's a derivation of red dragon, two heads is the biggest distinction. It can alternately breathe flame, so it's vastly superior to red dragon. Originally, they lived in the back regions of the Demon continent, so it's unthinkable to see them appear in other continents like this…."

But it's a fact that the twin dragon is here.

Although its ability to breathe flames alternately is a problem.
But according to Shia, it's not like it can breathe flames infinitely.
After it breathed once, it can only breathe again after a certain amount of time has elapsed, it's a dragon's characteristic.

She continued the story.

"A silver lining in the dark cloud is that it's still only a youngling."
"Youngling? Like a child ?"
"Un. Thanks to that, its breath is still weak, and the scales shouldn't be that hard either."
"That was still soft, huh …"

It bounced armor-piercing bullet though ….

"Can't we do something with magic ?"
"U~n, I think it's useless. Dragon scales are hard that magic is hardly effective."

A-minus-rank magician Snow grumbled.
Now Snow asked me in return.

“Lute-kun, the exploding magic tool before — the hand grenade — how about you make some more ? If we stealthily go back to the wagon and get the magic liquid metal, then you can do it, right ?”
“That is hard, too.”

I showed her the small barrel I picked up.
It’s one of the two spare barrels of magic liquid metal in the wagon.

The other one got thrown out of the wagon, then crashed into a tree trunk and got smashed to pieces thereafter.
This was the last one.
When it fell down, the lid got opened and the content got spilt out.

The amount left is about enough to make one more hand grenade; that’s it.
Even if it hits, one hand grenade is probably is not going to be enough to bring down that twin dragon.

“Sorry to ask again, but is it really true that the chance it gives up on us is zero ? For example, if we hide in this cave for about one week, won’t it give up by then ?”
“Unlikely. Even if we live in this cave for 1 month.”

Shia declared.
More than one month is still ineffective, huh ….

“And in reality, staying in this cave is dangerous too, you know. If it sniffed us out and breathed into the cave only once, we, who don’t have anywhere to run to, would become whole-roasted.”

Gomugo’s group shuddered up at the easy-to-understand scenario that Shia explained.

The situation was pressing, and it was a deadlock huh ….
The only saving grace was that the twin dragon was still young; compared to a grown one, it’s relatively weak.

The cave was permeated by a gloomy air.
Sobbing voices came from Gomugo's female employees.
It looked like Gomugo's group has given up mentally.

Shia resolved herself and asked:

"…Anyone has magic stone ?"
"Magic stone? What will you use it for?"
"If you break the magic stone that holds magic power, it will cause a big explosion. I will take it down together with me."

In short, the same as kamikaze attack in my previous world huh.
I didn't know that magic stones had that special characteristic.

But I dunno if it's good luck or bad luck, nobody has a magic stone. Gomugo usually deals with it, but this time, he brought different goods.

"…..Understood. Then I will draw away that twin dragon till the last moment; in that time, everyone please run far away."
"I definitely won't allow that!"
[That's right! I can't do something like watching Shia-san get killed!]

Snow and Chrisse voiced their objections.
But Shia didn't change her mind.

"Thank you. But like this, then only death awaits everyone. Looking at it realistically, this is the best option. I am very happy about the madam's words."

The two of them went silent with painful faces.
Shia looked at me.

"Young master, please make one hand grenade with that magic liquid metal. If I let the hand grenade explode inside that twin dragon's mouth, then I can probably bring one of its heads down."
"I refuse. Shia's strategy is rejected."
"Even young master …. Please give up. There's no other way to save everyone! And please don't worry about me. Lastly, if you'd listen to my only request–"
"No no. Thanks to Shia, I got an even better strategy. That's why I want you

to listen to me first."
"A strategy better than mine …?"

While listening to me, Shia blinked so many times that I lost count.
Not only her, but Snow and everyone also became round-eyed at my confident attitude.

"Lute-kun, Really?"
[As expected of Onii-chan!]

I took out the box with the surprise present inside that I bought at the mining town for the two of them.
Inside that box stored two small magic stones.

Exactly because of these small magic stones, I can make ***that***(●●●●).

"With this, I'll blow that skink lizard's brain beyond the stars."

Chapter 065 – Twin Dragon Extermination

I opened up the box lid, then I presented the bracelets to Snow and Chrisse.

“Not magic liquid metal bracelets, I’ve been secretly saving money to properly choose fitting bracelets for both of you.”
“Lute-kun…”
[Onii-chan…]

While looking at each other, we took each others’ hands.

“Young master, madams, please don’t get lovey-dovey in this emergency situation.”

With Shia’s tsukkomi, I cleared my throat and continue talking.

“So, ehem. These bracelets each have a magic stone that can be used once. I’m planning to use them to defeat the twin dragon.”
“However, I don’t think it’s possible to damage those hard scales with something this small.”

Shia pointed it out while apologetically looking at the bracelet.
Don’t say small! Even one of this size costs three gold coins apiece.
It’s one wash toilet, you know! One wash toilet!

But as Shia said, these magic stones are indeed small.
Small enough to be balanced on the tip of a pinky finger.

“It’s okay. On the contrary, I’ll be troubled if it’s any bigger. Because I will make [high-explosive incendiary rounds] out of these stones.”
“High-explosive, incendiary rounds?”

Shia inquired with a bewildered face.
In english, it’s called [explosive incendiary].

It's a 5.56mm cartridge made by Germany in WW2.

Inside the cartridge's bullet, there's a small piece of metal acting as a firing hammer; detonators and yellow phosphorus in turn get stuffed in. The inertia of the bullet's impact will cause the firing hammer to collide into the detonator and make it explode. Because of that, the incendiary mix (yellow phosphorus) will scatter and burn.
In other words, it's a bullet that explodes from the inside.

This time, the yellow phosphor will be replaced by the magic stones from the bracelets. Exactly what I needed, 2 pieces; it was really good that I bought them.

"With this, I will make [7.62mm x 51 High Explosive Incendiary Round] for the M700P. Chrisse, I want you to shoot through its eye socket; that will blow its head from the inside."

With her exceptional skill, I'm sure she can do it!
She nodded with a resolved expression.

[Got it. I'll do my best.]

Everyone nodded following Chrisse words, then I worked out the details of the strategy's outline.
After the strategy was decided, I immediately produced [7.62mm x 51 High Explosive Incendiary Rounds] with the remaining magic liquid metal.

After I finished making two rounds, I added a certain function to the knife as insurance.
This, too, is a borrowed idea from [7.62mm x 51 High Explosive Incendiary Round].
I made a prototypical bullet and knife on the spot.
I don't even have the luxury to test; I can only pray that it works well.

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Dawn——.

We were slightly away from the cave wherein we hid.
Snow, Chrisse, Shia were on top of a steep cliff.
Trees were behind them, while bare rock was at the front for peeking.

A cliff, so to say, but it's not that tall.

As expected, they objected going back to the place where we were attacked by the twin dragons.
Certainly, there is enough space there, but the scattered luggage could be a hindrance. So, we agreed to the Gomugo group's suggestion and chose a location that heightens our success rate.

While hugging her beloved gun, the M700P, Chrisse closed her eyes and severed her idle thoughts.
Snow and Shia stood next to her as bodyguards.

I hid in the bushes, where I could see the girls,so that I could attack the twin dragon from the back when the time is right.

"OoOoooooooOOoOooOoO!!!"

"!, It came. Chrisse-chan, it came!"

Blocking half of the sun and flying through the trees behinds Snow group, the twin dragon showed itself.
A distinctive injury in one eye.
Certainly it's the dragon from yesterday.

The twin dragon's attack direction is limited because of the trees behind Snow group. It's inevitable that it will attack from the front
The prey followed the planned course!

"Madam, be prepared!"

Chrisse's throat vibrated to Shia's words.
To increase her concentration power, she sang the [Rifleman's Creed] song that I taught her.

「これぞ我がライフル。世に多くの似たものあれど、これぞ我唯一のもの
《This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine.》」

「我がライフルこそ、我が親友、そして我が命。我は己の命を統べるかのようにそれを意のままとする
《My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life.》」

「我がライフルは我無くしては無意味。ライフルを持たぬ我も無意味。我は正しくライフルを解き放つべし。我は我を殺めんとする敵よりも正しくその身を射貫くべし。我は敵を撃つべし、敵が我を討つその前に
《My rifle, without me, is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than my enemy who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will……》」

「我がライフルと我は知る、この戦争にて大切なものは、我々が放った弾丸、我々が起こした爆発音、我々によって作られた煙、その何れでも無いことを。我々は理解する――それは数発の命中であるということを
《My rifle and myself know that what counts in this war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, nor the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit……》」

「我がライフルは我と同じく人である。それは我が命そのもの、そして我が兄弟。我は、その弱さ、その強さ、その部品、その付属品、その照準器、そして銃身――それら全てを知るであろう。我は我自身をそうするように、ライフルを清潔にし万全に保ち、我らは互いにその一部となる
《My rifle is human, even as I, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strength, its parts, its accessories, its sights and its barrel. I will keep my rifle clean and ready. We will become part of each other. We will》」

「神の前に、我は我が信仰を誓う。我がライフルそして我は我が家の守護者なり。我々は敵を打ち倒す者、我が命の救済者なり
《Before God, I swear this creed. My rifle and I are the defenders of my family. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life》」

「そう、勝利は我々のもの。そして我々の勝利の後、敵なき世界が訪れるであろう
《So be it, until victory is ours and there is no enemy》」

Lately, Chrisse, who has been unable to speak because of bullying, could talk in front of us little by little.

To let her rehabilitate slowly, we didn't urge her on; she didn't even pick up the mini blackboard.

She is now singing "Rifleman's Creed" with her beautiful voice.

"OoOoooooooOOoOooOoO!!!"

The twin dragons roared, overpowering Chrisse's fairy-like voice.
Then it let out a breath of fire from the head with the wounded eye.

In response to the incoming breath, Snow and Shia raised both of their hands and shouted loudly!

"Dragons of snow and ice, heed my call. Let a world of glaciers come forth before me! Permafrost!" x2

A composite magic of ice and water.
Snow and Shia cooperated and chanted magic.
Because Shia is weak at ice magic, the spell was limited to intermediate-level magic. But by combining the power of two people, they are able to defend against the dragon breath.
In the case of both heads attacking simultaneously, it's probably impossible to stop it.

However, the collision between the breath and ice magic created large quantities of steam.
Concealing the figure of twin dragon

"Suu～"

But, Chrisse was unconcerned and breathed in.

“Haa~”

Breathe out.
In an off-hand stance, the M700P gun’s muzzle pointed toward the steam.
In an instant — the twin dragon which hated the steam flapped its wings.
With just one motion, the steam was blown off, but the opponent’s movement was also suspended.

Like frost descending on a dark night… Chrisse squeezed the trigger.

BANG!

A bullet with an initial velocity of 838m/s, which is more than twice the speed of sound, had an impact like it was sucked into the eye socket of the twin dragon which wasn’t releasing its breath.

“OoOoooooooOOoOooOoO!!!”

Internal explosion!
A large quantity of blood poured out from the eyes, nose and mouth of the uninjured head of the twin dragon.
Unable to endure the pain, it violently slammed into the ground.

Chrisse pulled the bolt back and forth, releasing an empty case.

Snow immediately performed additional magic

“Gather ,O spirit of ice; dance and submerge that evil being into the ground!
Freezing Ice Barrier!”

A composite binding magic of ice and water.
The ground sank, restraining the twin dragon’s arm, wings, legs and neck within a lump of ice.
With this, Snow expended a considerable amount of magical power.
Sweat formed around her forehead, and she breathed roughly.

But, the enemy already used its breath once.
Continuous use is unlikely.
Furthermore, the ice-binding restricts its movement.

Our victory is assured!

“C- Chrisse-chan, I’ll leave it to you!”

Chrisse nodded reassuringly to Snow, who was panting and soaked with sweat.
Chrisse once again took her aim and squeezed the trigger.

[OoOoooooooOOoOoooOoO!!!]
“!?” x3

Unexpectedly — the twin dragon breathed flames again.

“Madams! It’s dangerous!”

Shia supported her body with body-enhancing magic, hugged the tired Snow and the concentrating Chrisse, and jumped down the cliff to avoid the breath.

The flame engulfed the bullet and curved its trajectory, as it hit off the mark.
Then it exploded.

[OoOoooooooOOoOoooOoO!!!]

The twin dragon put power into its limbs as if to escape from the binding.
Cracks appeared on the ice that bounded the dragon; I predicted it toonly last for a few more seconds.

“Like I’d let you!”

Before the dragon escaped from the binding, I jumped out from the bush to stop it.
I enhanced my entire body!
I used all my magic power and approached the dragon in one second.

I raised the knife over my head and jumped.

“Got it!”
[OoOoooooooOOoOoooOoO!!!]

One second later, the twin dragon escaped from the ice-binding, then it repelled the knife, which was swinging down while aimed at its eye, with its forehead.
I couldn't endure the impact and thus let go of the knife.

The final trump card, which was the knife I made as an insurance, danced in the air.

'Shit! To think I made such a blunder at the end!'

As I was regretting letting go of the knife, a shadow flew past me overhead.
It's Shia!

Shia caught the knife that was spinning in the air!
Just like that, the knife pierced through the twin dragon's eye socket.

But, just the knife in the eye alone isn't much damage.
The knife blade is short, and there's no poison smeared on it either.
But the real thing started from there!

"Shia! Just like that press the switch on the knife!"
"Understood, young master!"

Recalling the way to handle the knife, which I taught everyone as insurance beforehand, Shia pressed the switch.
'Pashu!', a little dull sound like something flew out, the gas made with magic compressed inside the knife's handle propulsed, and it tore the inside of the head to shreds.
The twin dragon's head was destroyed from the inside,as blood spout out, it was completely dead.

As we realized the dragon has become completely silent, everyone flopped down from wherever they were.
We were completely exhausted from fatigue and using too much magic.

I tried to stand up and walk to where Shia and everyone were.

"Thanks, Shia, for covering my mistake. You really helped me"
"Yeah, really. At the end, when Lute-kun's knife got repelled, I broke into a

cold sweat.”
[Me too.]
“I didn’t do anything to deserve praising. I only did what was natural, as young master’s servant. Rather than that, to have brought down the twin dragon with just one click, this is an amazing knife.”

She was staring at the knife she pulled out from the dragon’s head.

The knife in Shia’s hand is the [スズメバチナイフ] I made with what little magic liquid metal left–literal translation would be [wasp knife]

As the name implies, just like the hornet, you stab the knife in and the highly pressurized gas inside the knife handle (carbonated gas cylinder, this time I used magic as substitute) will travel through the blade to the tip with the press of the switch. Because of this, the stabbed internal organs or object will be pulverized into smithereens. It’s that fearsome of a knife.

Long ago, I’ve seen a video where the [wasp knife] stabbed a watermelon and blew it up from inside.
Originally, it was created to fight sharks underwater. Nowadays, only hunters that fight bears or aircraft pilots are allowed to buy it.

It was really good that I made it as insurance.

Shia really likes the knife, and she praised it repeatedly.

“I’ve used many knives, but this really is a good one.”
“If you like the knife that much, I’ll give it to you.”
“Is it okay, young master?”
“Of course! What are you saying? The one who played the most active role was Shia”

Actually, the one who played the most active role was Chrisse, but I personally wanted to give the MVP position to Shia.
Since the magic-stone idea was inspired from Shia’s words, and she saved Snow and Chrisse from the fire breath, then covered up my mistake at the end.

Thereupon hearing my words, a soft smile appeared on her face for the first time.

“Thank you, young master. I will use this knife with great care.”

Like this, we escaped from the twin-dragon crisis safely.
And we returned to Gomugo’s group, who were dying to know the result.

Chapter 066 – Request

The first thing we did after we defeated the Twin Dragon was to encase the dragon's corpse in ice.
According to Shia — 'There aren't many Twin Dragon corpses in a condition as good as this, so if we bring it back we can sell it for a good price', and she insisted on it so we ripped off a scale and leave a wooden tag with adventurer number on it then had her, who still had magic power left encase the dragon's corpse in ice.

This way it wouldn't be eaten by other monsters, nor taken by other adventurers.
After that we'd return to the mining town once, and ask the guild to transport the Twin Dragon. Transportation would cost us, but it'd be insignificant compared to the money we'd get after selling it.

And so, we finally headed back to Gomugo's group and let them know the result.
When they saw our figures still in one piece, they shouted out of joy from within the cave.
It was because we'd returned alive from almost certain death situation.
The ruckus they made couldn't be helped, but they were so loud I was worried my eardrums would burst.

Not everything had went well.

We went back to the open space we planned to make camp on to take back the cargo we left, but the horned horses had turned into Twin Dragon food, and the cargo and personal effects were all crushed to pulp.
It was the result of the Twin Dragon raging about in fury.

We have no other option but to retreat to the Mining Town Vesta for the moment, but we should consider ourselves lucky to escape with our lives, at least.

We'd been fighting all through last night so we decided to make camp here.
As they'd used up quite a lot of magic power, I let Snow and Shia rest first.

"Sorry Lute-kun, Chrisse-chan, let me rest first."
"Don't worry about it, you worked very hard for it, Snow."
[That's right, and I'm still going strong so I'll be alright!]

"Thanks Chrisse-chan! Ah, but sleeping with a sweating Lute-kun in a cramped bed and [sniff-sniff]-ing his scent might be good, too…"
"Just hurry and go to sleep already. Recover your magic power!"
"Au, that hurt, Lute-kun~!"

I'd done a karate chop on Snow who had just said something dumb with a straight face.
Really, she never changes.

"Madam, the bed is ready."

Shia had patched together a simple bed out of the wood from the broken wagons.
The two of them got on the bed to recover their stamina and magic power.

Chrisse and I who remained fought our drowsiness as we stood watch over our surroundings.

Meanwhile, Gomugo and the others collected the scattered cargo and tidied them up.
They also collected our luggage alongside, and sorted through the things that could be used.
I was about to say thanks —

"It's us who should be thanking you. You saved our lives from the Twin Dragon"

They felt grateful and thanked me, bowing their heads again and again.

I took up their offer and let them collect our luggage.
Thanks to them the [38 Special (9mm)], [7.62mm × Russian Shot], and the

[7.62mm × 51 NATO] spare rounds scattered about by the Twin Dragons were gathered in one place.

At dusk Snow and Shia woke up and relieved us from watch duty.
It looked like about half their magic had been restored.
Chrisse and I switched with them and got on the bed.

It was a standing tree with poles propped against it, wooden planks laid underneath those, burnt and torn canopy cloths laid on the planks and a sheet that looked clean covering it all. And it was cramped. It was practically a hamster bed.
But once Chrisse and I crawled into bed, it didn't take long for us to fall asleep.
I didn't even have the energy to lay my hands on my cute cute wife sleeping next to me.
We slept like logs until we were woken up when it was time for us to switch with Snow and Shia for night watch duty.

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The next morning, we set off from the camping grounds.

Before we departed, Snow and Shia cast some more magic on the iced Twin Dragon to thicken the ice.
With that we wouldn't need to worry about it melting for a while.

It took us two days when we went out but because we were walking it took three days to get back.

When we reached the Mining Town Vesta, we rushed to the inn.
Without having to worry about being attacked by monsters like in the camping grounds, I slept soundly.

The next morning we went with Gomugo to the Adventurers' Guild.
The reason we took him along was because I wanted another testimony besides ours.

We reported to the Adventurers' Guild.
We showed them the peeled scale and had them hear not only ours but also Gomugo's testimony.
The Adventurers' Guild showed no doubt and believed our evidence.

We requested the Adventurers' Guild's services for the transportation of the iced dragon.
From here on it'd take more or less 10 days to transport the remains of the Twin Dragon, including the preparatory period and the round trip.

Several adventurers went ahead to identify and secure the Twin Dragon frozen in ice.
A large transport wagon would come later to carry it.
This large transport wagon had magic stones built into it, equipped with the function to make the cargo's weight lighter than normal.
And of course this transportation would cost quite a lot of money.

The Adventurers' Guild had only heard about the Twin Dragon and hadn't examined it in detail but it could easily fetch at least 1000 gold coins.
That's an amazing amount of money.

Which is why they had no problems with deferring the payment.
In return, since the Adventurers' Guild had no way to pay the 1000 gold, they requested us to not ask for it in a lump sum.
I, of course, agreed.

We would also be in big trouble carrying the 1000 gold even if they did pay in full.
The Adventurers' Guild suggested that we deposit the money in the guild.
That way we could take the money out from Adventurers' Guilds in different continents.

As long as your tag and password number aren't stolen, there's no worry of it being taken out by other people. In case you withdraw a large amount of money then they will verify the person himself too.

Shia also recommended it, so I carried out the procedure to deposit the reward money to the guild.
But I asked them to let me take out the necessary money immediately when the goods would arrive.

The necessary money was for the merchandise of our client Gomugo which we couldn't protect. I wanted to pay him back for the goods, wagons, and horned horses that he lost.

But the concerned person made a surprised face himself.

"Normally if you're targeted by a dragon, a twin dragon even, and getting out alive is already godsend! To think you'd even pay me back for the merchandise!"

Since he was affiliated with the Merchant Guild his insurance was guaranteed, but it looked like it wouldn't be anytime soon so he was very grateful at my offer, bowing his head.

Of course since he would be insured by the guild, I didn't need to fully reimburse him; just covering up for his deficit seemed to be enough.
I finished the procedure for Gomugo to take out the money as soon as the assessment price of the Twin Dragon came out.

When he takes out that money, we don't need to be there to witness; he can do it alone.

After this we only need to pay the penalty for the rental wagon & horned horse then we will have resolved all of our money problems.
Gomugo just kept bowing his head as he left.

Next problem is our adventurer level.
This time it's a quest to level up to level 3. Judging by result alone, the quest was a failure.
But we captured the level 4 class Twin Magicians.
And we subjugated a level 5 class Twin Dragon (young) — not only level 2 or level 3 adventurers rarely encounter such high level quests in such a short time, get caught up in it, and even come out triumphant.

It'd be easy if we were travelling with a level 5 adventurer, but we did that with just us alone. So would they raise our rank? If they do, would they raise it to level 4 or 5 ? Or is it restricted at 3? Looks like this matter can't be decided soon.

For now they put it on hold.

Before the Twin Dragon's corpse arrive at mining town, we decided to back to the town Meiya is staying in.
Preparatory time included, the time for the Twin Dragon to be brought back is about 10 days. And we don't know when they will finish assessing it.

Rather than waiting at the mining town, we decided it's a better plan to go back and rest.
Regarding payment for the transportation and assessment, we can just pay at the Adventurer Guild at our home.

And like that, after 3 days, we rented a wagon to leave the mining town and head back home, which we estimate would take 8 days.

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"Lute-sama! Welcome back!"

When we returned, Meiya learnt of it and immediately rushed over.
We just got back and just placed our luggage on the floor.
No matter how fast you are, isn't that a little bit too fast …

Instinctively, I searched my clothes if there is transmission device on it.
She didn't realized what I was doing, and spoke with the high tension voice I haven't heard in a while.

"Lute-sama's first disciple, his right hand, Meiya Dragoon present! I've been continuously waiting for your return!"

Somehow without me knowing she added 1 more title “right hand” to herself on top of “first disciple”. If I just let her be will she add more?

“I’m back, Meiya. Thanks for looking after my house while I’m gone.”
“I only did what was natural as a disciple! By the way has everyone eaten dinner?”
“No, we haven’t ……”
“Well then, how about you stay over at my house today? I’ve already prepared dinner, I will prepare a hot bath for you to relieve your fatigue from the travel too.”

The 3 girls’ ears sensitively reacted to the single word “bath”.
During the journey, we can only wipe our body with towel soaked in hot water, or wash our body with just a basin of hot water at the inn.
We can’t resist the charm of the tub full of hot water, and stretch our hands and feet in it.
Furthermore, at Meiya’s house, the wash toilet is fully equipped.

And it’s a pain to start making dinner now.
This is where we should depend on Meiya’s goodwill.

“Well then I’ll take you up on your offer, let’s stay over at Meiya’s house today, shall we?”
“Thank you, Lute-sama! Well then, please ride the coach outside. I’ve already prepared for necessities such as change of clothes!”

Meiya joyfully led us outside and beckoned us to get on the carriage waiting there.

Already familiar with Meiya’s mansion, I get into the bath first.
I washed my head and body, removed the filth from the journey.
Submerged into the hot bath to the shoulder, I let my voice leak naturally.

Getting out of the bath, I put my hand through the sleeve of the dragon kungfu clothes I am already used to.
In the living room, until the girl gang arrived, Meiya and I drank some chacha while waiting.

With everyone present, we started the meal.

“Then in just a few days, you got the bounty of the twin magicians and exterminated a Twin Dragon !? ”

In the middle of the meal, Meiya raised her surprised voice when she heard about the details.

“But in the end, our level up quest has failed, though.”
“But, to get that much achievement, you leveling up is assured.”
“I hope so too.”

I swallowed the stew brimming with melted fat and shrugged.

“But the more I hear, the more wonderful it is. To think that you made a bullet that destroys magic stone on purpose and let it explode inside the body! An idea that a normal person can’t think of even if he struggled for 100 years! As expected of Lute-sama, the god of magic tool development!”
[That was surprising, indeed.]
“I’m personally more surprised at Chrisse-chan who shot the bullet into that small dragon’s eye. It’s absolutely impossible for me.”

The skills they pursue are different.
There’s no point in comparing.

“By the way Shia-san, can you show me the thing called [Wasp Knife] that Lute-sama made?”
“I don’t mind but, why is your breathing is so rough?”

Shia while bewildered, removed the [wasp knife] hanging from her waist and handed it over.
Because I haven’t refilled magic in place of carbon dioxide so even if the switch is pushed, no gas will come out.

“Th,this is the new knife Lute-sama made himself! To think that after stabbing, it can send gas in to destroy the inside! This is a demon king-like idea! In short, Lute-sama is both god and demon king, you have 2 faces! Aaah! Lute-sama’s knowledge truly knows no bound,it feels like I’m turning weird!”
“You already are, already. Stop rubbing your cheek against the knife, you’re

bleeding!"
"M,me!? I have dirtied Lute-sama's artistic knife with blood!?"
"You're worrying about the wrong thing here! You're a girl so take better care of yourself. Snow, sorry but please use magic to heal her."
"Got it~"

As expected of Snow, even though shehas a bad relationship with Meiya, she healed Meiya's wound without complaining.
I took the knife from her during that time.
Meiya seems to still want to molest the gimmicked knife, but I ignore her. Shia cleaned the blooded knife with magic.

"Well in any case, this time, without Shia it would have been dangerous. How do I say it, I was really grateful to have brought Shia as a slave."
"Yeah! If it was just us, we wouldn't be able to escape from the twin magicians trap nor save the hostage."
[I also learned a lot about how to setup camp and to do night watch.]
"No, someone like me…."

Maybe because Shia wasn't used to getting praised, she lost her words.
…No, if I have to say, she had that look when one couldn't stand receiving an award for something she didn't do.

Suddenly, she somehow recalled the words she muttered after she said "I will suicide attack the twin dragon".

'And please don't worry about me. Lastly, if you'd listen to my only request–
'

Remembering it, Shia raised her voice.

"…..Everybody! I am very sorry!"
"Eh, Shia!?"

She suddenly stood up from the chair and then knelton the floor.
Exactly like a knight you see in anime, manga or film.

Not only me, but Snow, Chrisse and Meiya all stared in wonder at Shia's sudden action.
Without minding our reaction, she kept on talking.

“I had been telling all of you lies! I do not possess any [Oracle] ability. I became your slave because of a certain person’s instruction! In addition, I’m putting my life on the line here, please!”

Shia lowered her head further and raised her voice.

“Please! Please! Save the High Elf kingdom!”

Her extremely desperate voice resounded within the room.

Chapter 067 – To the High Elf Kingdom

Shia, still kneeling on the floor, revealed her true character.

“I am a guard-maid belonging to the High Elf kingdom Enol. For a certain reason, I became a slave to test you all, please forgive me!”
“P-please wait. I don’t understand what are you saying. What do you mean by becoming a slave to test us? From the way Shia said it, it seems that you knew that we would buy a slave.”

It was a coincidence that we bought a slave.
Meiya had accidentally eavesdropped on our conversation, and advised us to buy a slave.
Not being there, how did Shia know?

She painfully bit her lip.

“I’m sorry, I can’t tell you the details with my own mouth here. But one thing I can say is that if I didn’t become a slave, I wouldn’t be able to be together with young master.”
“Sorry, I don’t understand.”

She didn’t have to become a slave on purpose, couldn’t she just called out to me?
While we were perplexed, she bowed sincerely.

“It’s not strange for you to be perplexed, but I can’t tell you everything here. So for the details, after we have arrived at High Elf kingdom, the person who ordered me to become a slave in order to meet young master, will tell you everything.”
“Hey, is the High Elf kingdom such a dangerous place ?”
“No, you’re wrong. It’s a country on the west side of Fairy continent, full of natural lakes and forests. There are also a lot of people who come there for sightseeing.”
“It’s just as Snow-san said. I’ve never heard any stories that the High Elf kingdom has fallen into a crisis or anything.”

Snow and Meiya answered my question.
In short, it doesn't seem like they've heard anything like danger approaching the peaceful country.
After hearing their answers, we looked at Shia again.

But she was still petitioning desperately.

"Everything I've told you is the truth. There are no falsehoods. Please, won't you go to Enol, it's fine if you just hear the story out! ……If after you've heard it all, and there's anything that displeases you, just say it, and as your slave, I will even kill myself. That's why, please, somehow, please lend me your power!"

Shia just kept bowing without moving.

[What do we do, onii-chan ?]

Chrisse showed me the mini blackboard.
I fold my arms and think.
It appears that Shia is just a guard maid that received orders from someone and approached us.

It's just that Shia isn't a bad person. Tested us means that she doubted us a bit … so it's probably true that she's troubled.
We've been saved by her many times, we trusted her, so just hearing her out is probably okay ?
If it's beyond our capacities, then we can just refuse and go back.

"…..Okay, if just hearing it out is okay, then let's hear it first, shall we ? First let's go there, and hear the story from the one who instructed Shia, after that it's not late to judge for ourselves. Furthermore, Shia is our comrade, we can't just flat out refuse, can we ?"
"Yep, I thought Lute-kun would say so."
[Me too, I agree with onii-chan's opinion!]
"But going to the Fairy continent's west side alone will take half a year, won't it ?"
"Then please use my airship! By air you can reach the High Elf kingdom in just a bit over 1 month!"

Personal airship …… if I'm not wrong, that thing costs a fortune ……
Or perhaps I should say, as expected of Meiya, the Magic stone Princess.

"Th, thank you, everyone!"

Shia raised her face, tears oozing out of her eyes.
With this, it's decided that we're all going to the High Elf kingdom, Enol.

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Since we've decided to go to High Elf kingdom, Enol, the mobilization was quick.
The next day, we explained the circumstances to the store where we rented a wagon and paid the penalty.

After that we went to the Adventurer's guild.
We informed the usual receptionist girl that we're going to be away from this town for few months.
If the assessment for the twin dragon and the deliberation for our level up finished, just wait since we will listen to it later.

"Well then, just in case, please tell the Adventurer's guild in Enol about my level up deliberation. Since I may do quests there and have chances to level up. In that case, if they know about our circumstances then they can let us level up right away."
"Then Lute-sama, please lend me your tag. I'm going to carve [Level up deliberating] on it."

I handed over the tag as I was told.
As usual she processed it with the quill pen which was a magic tool.
I took the tag she handed back.

After we left the Adventurer's guild, we headed for the aircraft owned by Meiya.
The aircraft was at the port.
It wasn't floating on the water, but stored in a rented out storehouse.
It was decided by the law, it seemed.

To make one ship, it took boat load of money.
Furthermore there are also money and connection needed to rent the storehouse, for maintenance,etc… in short, just owning it would take another boat load of money.
That was why even for nobles, it was hard to own an aircraft.
So just the fact that Meiya owned one personal aircraft was enough to show how much of an amazing person she was.

When I showed up at the port's storehouse, I saw Meiya was hurling instructions for the cargo.

"Drinking water can be made with magic so it's unnecessary. Instead of that, load magic liquid metal on. You can treat it roughly to some extent, but be careful to not spill the contents while moving it."

On the outside the aircraft looked like a normal sailing ship. The only different part was that it was flat so it could land on the ground. Its size is bigger than a yacht, but smaller than a normal ship.
It flew with large amounts of magic power stored in magic stones. That's why when it was flying, even if someone were to use magic on the surroundings, they can't be sensed, that's also one of its demerits.

The magic liquid metal I asked for just got loaded on. Just like aircraft in my previous world, this one had weight limits too, it had to transport magic liquid metal and magic stones already, so Meiya had to select the rest of the cargo carefully.

A porter man asked Meiya.

"Meiya-sama, if you want to make the ship light, wouldn't it be better to leave this ?"

The wooden box next to the porter contained three wash toilets.
What nonsense is this man saying!
Isn't that the most important thing!

After I made the wash toilet for my house, the interested Meiya gave the blueprint to the craftsmen and had them replace all the toilets in her house with wash toilets.
At that time I asked her for some spares too.
So that I could replace mine immediately if it were to break.

The ones we were bringing onto the aircraft were also a part of that.
One spare for when the one already installed on the aircraft broke.
One for the place where we would stay in High Elf kingdom.
The last one was spare for the one above.

Each and every one of them was necessary.
Leaving the toilets behind, really, what exactly was that man thinking.
Meiya seemed to understand too, as she scolded the man.

"That is necessary! Leaving that behind is outrageous! Move that right now, and carefully, pay more attention to the safety!"
"U-understood!"

The man was yelled at by Meiya, then he called his subordinates to carry the wash toilets onto the aircraft.
As expected of someone who called herself my first disciple.
……Well, if she were to say something like leaving the wash toilets behind maybe I'd excommunicate her immediately.

While thinking that, I called out to Meiya.

"Good work, Meiya."
"Well if it isn't Lute-sama! You even took the trouble to come to this dusty place to see me! I am extremely moved!"

"How's the progress ?"
"I am preparing so we can leave the day after tomorrow. Anyway, why do you have to take the magic liquid metal with us ? I think it's also available in High Elf kingdom"
"We will be staying on the aircraft for one month right ? So I thought I

should use that time to develop a new weapon."
"Ah, a new weapon !?"

When Meiya heard about a new weapon, stardust seemed to sparkle in her eyes.

"W-what kind of thing will it be !?"
"During our last quest our fire powers were lacking, so I'm thinking of developing a weapon to supplement that. That weapon's name is: Panzerfaust."

In 1942, during WW2, the German army developed a ground-breaking disposable recoilless high explosive anti-tank warhead launcher. That was the [Panzerfaust] — it means [Tank fist] in German.
A thin long iron pipe attached with the warhead which looked like two cups stuck together at the lips. Its full silhouette was a shapelike a horsetail.
The German army used the Panzerfaust in a sense like hand grenades against the USSR's tanks to destroy the tracks, damage the engine, … to immobilize it.
Furthermore the launched warhead's recoil was so little even a girl could handle it easily.

Also, the type I was thinking to make this time was [Panzerfaust 60] type.

The first Panzerfaust that was made was [Panzerfaust klein].
Second one was [Panzerfaust 30].
Third one was [Panzerfaust 60].

The reason I didn't choose to make [Panzerfaust klein], [Panzerfaust 30] was that the firing mechanism was too simple, like*pachinko*, which caused a lot of accidents.
Thinking about safety, destructive power (compared to klein, type 30 and on had about 4 times the amount of explosives), the answer was only Panzerfaust 60.

The thing you should notice about this Panzerfaust was that the warhead used was either [shaped charge warhead] or [chemical energy bullet].
[Shaped charge warhead], or [chemical energy bullet] is explosive charge shaped with a hollowed inverse cone, the cavity was covered with a metal sheet (liner).

With the utilization of explosives …… chemical energy, armor which the bullet body couldn't destroy before, now could be destroyed.
As a result, [shaped charge warhead], or [chemical energy bullet] was the natural enemy of allarmoured weapons, soldiers.
And generally the [shaped charge warhead], or [chemical energy bullet] was misunderstood that it destroy armor due to the Munroe effect, but that was a mistake.

In the 1880s an American technician, Munroe discovered that instead of placing explosives directly to a flat iron plate, explosives with their surface caved inward could open a hole deeper in the iron plates.
That was the [Munroe effect].

In the 1920s a German scientist, Neumann discovered that lining the cavity of the explosives with a metal sheet could penetrate much more.
It was called the [Neumann effect].

By utilizing the [Neumann effect], [shaped charge warhead], or [chemical energy bullet] could penetrate armor that conventional bullets couldn't.
Well then, how does this [Neumann effect] penetrate armor ?

When the warhead's explosives explode, obeying physics, the explosion's energy would focus on the least resistant part which was the cavity (If there was no cavity in the explosives, the energy would be transmitted equally, like how light focuses due to a positive lens, from the surroundings, the energy would be focused into the center point of the cavity. From the actual explosion the focused energy was thought to be about 20%).
Until then it was the Munroe effect.

Due to the explosion energy's focusing, the metal sheet (liner) lined up inside the cavity (usually soft copper was used) would be evaporated (strictly speaking, it wasn't evaporated, but only turned into a liquid like state. Not by heat, but by pressure).
An evaporated jet blast of metal molecules, together with high-temp high-pressure gas would punch a hole into the hard armor plate.
Now that would be Neumann effect.

In short, the [Munroe effect] would focus the explosive energy, the [Neumann effect] would turn the metal liner into a jet blast of metal molecules and destroy the armor.

While omitting the part I couldn't tell, I explained the Panzerfaust to Meiya. When she was done listening, she was on both of her knees, tears streaming down her big eyes.

"What a marvelous story! I am the most fortunate person in this world! Like this, I get to hear directly from god–no, Lute-sama has exceeded even god! Lute-sama is already a living god desuwa!"
"Stop it, Meiya! There are people looking! Don't kneel, and don't you kiss my feet again!"
I used force to stop Meiya who was about to kiss my feet, and forcefully made her stand up.
I was happy that she idolized me, but I got the feeling that recently the frequency of her actions were turning from "sometimes" to "rampaging".

"A-anyway, with that in mind, I intended to devote myself into creating the Panzerfaust while we're moving, just so you know."
"I understand! This Meiya Dragoon! Will be helping Lute-sama!"
"I, I'm counting on you"

She took my hand, leaned her face closer like she was about to kiss and agreed.
Her heavy breathing and dazzlingly shining eyes are scary.

Like this, we prepared to head off to the High Elf kingdom, Enol.

Gun-Ota

- Volume 5 -

Chapter 068 – High Elf kingdom, Enol sightseeing

High Elf kingdom Enol was located in the territory of the Fairy race in the Fairy continent.
It took about one month and a half from the Dragon continent via the personal aircraft owned by Meiya.

High Elf kingdom Enol — with beautiful forests, lakes, High elves living in the fairytale-like country, or so it should have been……

“Come! Come! It’s cheap! Special High elf cake, it’s cheap!”
“Pendant that can make you become like High elf! If you buy now it’s only 5 silver!”
“How about a portrait of a High elf ? Just by having it you can extend your lifespan.”

“Uwaa-”

Overflowing stalls on both sides were spread out, in which a lot of goods were placed.
The humans who were inviting customers called out to some people who looked like tourist in earnest.
The ratio of humans was overwhelmingly high.
Probably 70~80%.

But I hadn’t seen any High elf figures anywhere.

I called out to Shia who was walking at the front to guide us.

“Isn’t this the High Elf Kingdom ? Not to say High Elf, I haven’t even seen any of the Fairy race either.”
“Yes, it’s as you say, but ……”

Then Shia started to explain.
The tourists came here to partake in the High elves' lifespan, and these human merchants seem to be catering to them.

The Beast race at about 200 years.
The Dragon race at about 300 years.
The Demon race at about 100~500 years.
The Human race at about 80 years, with that lifespan, compared to other races, it's short.

On the contrary, High elf of the Fairy race is the longest among all the races.
The Normal elf was about 1000 years.
The High elf's lifespan was said to be about 10000 years.

"Ten… ten thousand !?"
"The Fairy race representative of the 5 races heroes was a High elf, seems like that one lived to be 10000 years old, oldest among the heroes. But in reality, for High elves, the heart usually gives out first at a little over 2000 years old and they die"

Furthermore High elves only marry once in their whole life.
Therefore, as a race that governed marital love and longevity, they received tremendous support from the Human race.

That was why all the goods on sale at the stalls were modeled after the High elves', sweets, paintings, woodcarving dolls. On top of that, there was even a pendant imbued with magic that can change one's appearance to a High elf.

They wanted to receive High elf's blessing, even just a little.
(Almost like the combination of the crane, turtle and mandarin duck, eh.)
Because of their longevity, the population count is only around 300 person. For that reason they rarely appear before others. Between the humans, it was said that if you could see an elf you will extend your lifespan by 1 day, if you could touch, 1 year.
No matter which world, it seems that people love jinx and superstition.

"So, these people come here to meet with High elves?"
"No, to forcibly meet with High elves is prohibited. Moreover they live in a special place, where only those with special standing could enter."
"Special place?"

“It’s over there. That island is where the High elves live.”
“Ooo…”

Through the stalls, we followed Shia from behind, a huge lake appeared in front of our eyes.
It’s about twice as big as lake Biwa.
On the island in the middle of the lake, there was a gigantic tree standing like it swallowed the castle.
The High elves were probably living inside that castle.

“Are we going to that castle ? But I don’t see anything like a boat around here.”

Snow asked in place of the fascinated me.
Shia made a sour face.

“No, that’s …… I can’t lead you all there immediately…..”

Shia flusteredly explained.

“If you take out the boat without permission you will be arrested. Moreover, you’re only adventurers, not to say only level II. Even if you ask for permission, you won’t get it.”
“Ridiculous! Even though you asked the one and only Lute-sama to take the trouble to come here! How dare you!”

Meiya became enraged the moment she heard the explanation.
Shia earnestly bowed her head and apologized.

“I’m sorry! Pardon me! I know I’m being disrespectful, but first I have to go back to the castle to report that I’ve guided you here, so please wait a night at an inn”

If we just go to the inn specified by Shia and tell them, then we can stay for free.
Looks like she already arranged it when she left the country.
But it’s probably not that good…….

“Now now, calm down Meiya. Since it can’t be helped, let’s just leave the luggage at the inn and treat ourselves to some sightseeing”
[That’s right. Since we’re already here, let’s go look around leisurely.]
“Shia can use that time to go and report.”
“Thank you very much!”

Shia told us the inn’s place, then we parted there.
Shia said she will return to the inn the next morning.
Until she came back, everyone agreed to go sightseeing.

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The inn Shia told us was of the highest grade around the area.
We were assigned the suite-like rooms on the top.
From the windows, we got an unbroken view of the lake, Snow and Chrisse were pleased with that.

Maybe the innkeeper were paying attention so Snow and Chrisse and I got assigned one room.
Meiya was in another room.

Without delay, we left the luggage in our rooms and went back to the rows of stalls that we passed by before.

First we ate the [High elf cake] which seemed to be a speciality.
It’s baked wheat with jam stuffed inside in a High Elf mold.
Kinda like taiyaki ?

But is it really okay ? Grilling High elf …….

“It’s a little spongy but it’s delicious.”
“It dries up in the inside of your mouth really fast.”

Snow and Meiya ate with curiosity.
Then certainly, a certain Demon race person who's picky about sweet, my wife Chrisse–

Ate the High elf cakes with her usual [sweets aren't game] eyes and serious expression.

[The way they dissolve the wheat flour is naive. The batter is fine without being sweet, but the jam isn't sweet enough. Not only are they trying to save cost on the sugar, but the jam only has one type of flavor, I think it's better to add more. 2.17 out of 10.]

As usual, her scores are detailed.

This time it seems that the [High elf cake] was also not palatable.
Specialty doesn't necessarily mean it's good, or so they say.
There was also the possibilly of it doesn't match the taste of the ojou-sama, Chrisse.

Then, we stroll leisurely while eating [High elf cake].

"Ah, Lute-kun, it's a High Elf."

Snow pointed at a walking blonde, long ears, green eyes, elf like young girl.
A pendant hang conspicuously on her chest.

"No, it's a fake. That pendant is the proof. It's a popular souvenir from Enol, equipping it will change one's appearance into a High elf with simple magic."

It seems it's a rule, that to avoid crime and misunderstanding, the pendant must be worn externally, where it could be seen.

In exchange for the real thing not appearing, they sell the pendant and let tourists imitate High elves.
Just like in Kyoto, where they let tourists rent apprentice geisha clothes and walk outside, that was to let them emphasize the Kyoto-esque feeling for the other tourists.

This country expanded with the lake as the center, you can see the large Adventurer's guild here and there.

"Since we don't have anything to do, let's go to the Adventurer's guild to give greetings and let them know about our level up deliberation, shall we ?"

When we arrived in front of the Adventurers' Guild, I remembered.

Despite us being level II and III adventurers, we defeated the magicians with a bounty and a twin dragon (young), and because of that, they are now in the middle of deliberating how much our levels should rise. I should report that to the High elf Kingdom Enol's Adventurers' Guild sooner rather than later.

"That's right, we should go there before we forget about it."
[We still have time, too.]
"Wherever Lute-sama goes is where I'll go!"

With my wives' and my disciple's approval, we went to the Adventurers' Guild building.
Inside is, as usual, made up of the bank and offices.
We took a ticket and waited to be called.

The number on our ticket was called and we went to the counter, on the counter there was —

"Welcome, what is your business for today?"

The receptionist woman who was always in charge of us in the Dragon Continent!
Other than Meiya, everyone made a surprised look.

"? Um, what is wrong?"
"What's wrong? Why are you here!? Aren't you supposed to be at the Dragon Continent Adventurers' Guild!?"
"Dragon Continent… maybe you mean big sister?"
"— eh?"

After calming down and listening, she seems to be the younger sister of the receptionist who always looked after us.
But their appearance is truly like two peas in a pod, as if they're twins.
Like a typical Demon Race, she has sheep-like horns growing out of her head and bat-like wings out of her back. Of course, the Adventurers' Guild clothes she was wearing suits her.

"Sorry for causing a disturbance."
"Please don't worry about it. We do look more alike than even twins, people would mistake us for each other all the time since we were small. Is big sister doing well?"
"Yes, she's doing well. We were always in your sister's care."
"No way. I was worried that big sister was causing you trouble instead".

Not *trouble*, just that she gets scary whenever anything regarding 'marriage' or 'age' or 'wife' is brought up.
"Anyway, what is Lute-sama's business?"
"Actually, our level up is being deliberated right now. Your sister recommended us, too. We thought we should report here too, just in case."
"Thanks for the trouble. Well then would you please give me your tags for confirmation ?"

I took off the tag hanging on my neck and handed it to her.
With experienced hands, the little sister confirmed the tag with the magic tool.

"Thank you. Well then, in case you want to receive quests here, your achievements in the Dragon Continent will be taken into consideration when being evaluated."

After she gave me back the tag, she stood up from her seat and said "Please give regards to my big sister" as she bowed.
In my previous world, they say there are 3 people who look exactly like yourself, but this was a little bit too alike, wasn't it…..

We left the Adventurers' guild and stopped by a folk craft shop.
High elf's portrait, wood carved doll, brooch, hair clip… were being sold there.

"Wow, Lute-kun, look, look at this."

The goods that catched Snow's attention was the reversi piece with High elf's side face engraved onto it. Next to it was a foldable board.
Looks like this reversi piece was a limited item that can only be obtained in the High elf kingdom Enol.

Local item huh.

"Hee~, Reversi has even spread here huh."
[What is that ?]
"What happened ?"

Chrisse and Meiya who were checking out other goods asked.
Looks like they didn't know of Reversi.

Indeed I had never seen Reversi being sold anywhere in the Demon and Dragon continent.
Snow happily explained to them.

"See here, this is a toy called Reversi that was made by Lute-kun when he was a kid. It's a very interesting toy."
"This is [Reversi] ? I know it from investigation reports, but this is the first time I've seen it."
[How do you play this ?]

As I was about to ask Meiya for explanation, Chrisse tugged on my sleeve and asked.
I put Meiya's remark aside for now and teach my wife the way to play Reversi.
The rule for Reversi was simple, Chrisse and Meiya immediately remembered it.

"Since it's a rare chance, let's buy one and play with everyone ? I also wanted to play against Lute-kun for the first time in a while."

On Snow's suggestion we bought the local Reversi.
The pieces and board altogether were 1 silver, a little expensive.

I carried the Reversi.
Carrying shopping goods was also a man's duty.

And with that, let's play strip Reversi with my 2 wives tonight!
Not strip rock-paper-scissors, but strip Reversi!
During the day day I'm a gentlemanly husband, but at night I*Reversi* into a beast huh!
That was a good pun if I do say so myself.
……That was good, right ?

We finished the sightseeing like that. The sun was setting so we had an evening meal before it got crowded.
The store was a local restaurant.

This store's speciality seemed to be a fish dish made from the fishes that live in the big lake.
Since it was caught from the High elf lake, it was said that you will live 1 year longer if you eat this dish. Trying to sell everything with extra lifespan was a little…

I was a little turned off, but the dish was simple and delicious.
We also drank some local wine, and returned to the inn a little tipsy.

Before we reached the room, Snow's expression stiffened.

"Lute-kun, there is someone in the room."

Hearing that, Chrisse, Meiya and I also became alerted. This inn was a high grade one, the security is tight, so it's probably not a thief.
It could also be Shia that had returned.

Just to be safe, I lowered my hips and reached for the revolver.
I stood in front of Snow, Chrisse and Meiya, readied so I can draw my [S&W M10 2-inches] revolver anytime.

Confirmed I had finished my preparation, I slowly opened the door.

"–Welcome back, young master."
"……Shia huh?"

When I entered the room, there were 2 females waiting.

One was Shia who guided us here.
But she wasn't in her adventurer garb like in the afternoon.

Deep blue skirt so long it hid her feet, pure white apron over that, and a headdress on her head. The hem of the skirt is spacious, looked like you could hide assassination weapon in there. But even so, she had the appearance of an orthodox maid.
I was astonished by the gap and almost couldn't recognize if that was Shia for a moment.
Of course, it fitted her very much.

The other person in the room, nevertheless, wore an overcoat that covered her head.
She wasn't tall, only taller than Chrisse a bit.
If I had to say why I know it's a female despite her head being covered, it was because her boobs were so big that the coat couldn't hide it.
Probably even bigger than Snow's. In other words, short, big boobs — or loli bigboobs!
On the table was a cup of scented tea with steam still rising. Looked like Shia served this loli bigboobs.

"Everyone, please come in."

We entered the room as Shia invited.
The loli bigboobs who was sitting also stood up and faced us.
Shia stood in the middle and introduced the girl.

"This here is the one who told me to approach young master"

The girl removed the hood of the coat.
Long straight blond hair softly fell down.
Pointed long ears, fresh leaf colored pupils, a noble, beautiful girl like she was made by God himself. But that wasn't the problem.
Shia indifferently continued the introduction.

"High Elf kingdom Enol's 2nd princess, Lyss Enol Meméa-sama."

High Elf kingdom Enol's princess !?
A High Elf among High elves, is currently here.

The girl — Lyss smiled friendly.

“I have wanted to meet you, oh our hero-sama.”

Chapter 069 – Record Book

The High elf kingdom Enol's second princess, Lyss Enol Meméa, was inside the room.
She had boobs bigger than Snow's and a height that was just a little taller than Chrisse's. A loli, big boobs, beautiful girl.
A High elf among High elves was currently standing right in front of me.

She was the one who had told Shia to go and become my servant.
And she called me 'hero'.
Why was a High elf princess calling me 'hero' ?

The High elf girl called Lyss, who was introduced by Shia, gave a friendly smile.

Lyss' pupils were moist from deep emotions, and she took my hand.

"I really thank you for coming here. I have been waiting."
"A, ah, hello…"

Without knowing the situation, I could only give half-hearted reply.
Lyss wiped the corner of her eyes and gestured towards the sofa.

"What are we standing for? Let's sit and calm down firs–Kya!"
"Watch out!"

Lyss stepped on her coat and was about to fall over.
I caught her from behind by reflex.

"Ah! Aan…!"
"!?"
"Hi, hime-sama!?"

Shia called out panickedly.
Both of my hands were grabbing Lyss' boobs – ones that didn't match her

physique.
I hurriedly let go and she slowly sat on the floor.

“So, sorry! You were about to fall so I tried to help, it definitely was not because I had an ulterior motive or anyth…”
“N, no, don’t apologize, it was my fault for falling…… Since long ago, my body would become weak if my chest was touched…… I’m very sorry……”

Lyss’ cheeks were dyed beet red from the shame and excitement of her breasts being touched by someone from the opposite sex.

So, she’s a clumsy, sensitive, loli bigboobs princess.
First boku-ko, now doji-ko…is this for real ?

“Geez Lute-kun, no matter how much she asked for help, you can’t just go and touch her boobs like that.”
[Please be careful next time, oniichan.]
“Yes, I’m sorry.”

As if reading my mind, Snow and Chrisse rebuked me with perfect timing.

“If you are that interested in the opposite sex’s breasts, then I, at any time, wouldn’t mind.~”

Meiya’s eyes also became moist and redness of her cheeks didn’t lose to Lyss’.
Alright, I’ll just pretend I didn’t hear that.

Lyss borrowed Shia’s hand to stand up and sat back down on the sofa that she had been sitting on before.
We also followed suit.

I sat on the sofa, facing Lyss directly, while Snow and Chrisse sat to my left and right.
Meiya got herself a chair and sat down on it.

After Shia finished pouring tea for everyone, Lyss started the conversation.

“First, I truly thank you for coming to this faraway Enol. Please let me reintroduce myself. I am High elf kingdom Enol’s second princess, Lyss Enol Meméa.”
“I’m Lute, and these are my wives, Snow and Chrisse.”
“I am the one and only unparalleled genius magic tool inventor, Lute-sama’s first disciple, Meiya Dragoon!”

Meiya puffed up her chest without hesitation in front of the High elf princess.
As expected of the Magic stone Princess.
She’s got guts, or nerves of steel……

After the greetings finished, Shia, who was wearing maid clothes and standing behind Lyss, started talking.

“Originally, it should have been me who did the talking…… but Lyss-sama said that she wanted to talk directly to you, no matter what, so we ended up suddenly intruding on you. I’m really sorry.”
“Is it okay? They said that High elves don’t come over to this side, right?”

Furthermore, she’s royalty.
If she got into an accident or got kidnapped, it would turn into a big problem.
Shia wore a bitter face.

“Of course I stopped her but…… she insisted.”

She got her way, huh.
Looks like Shia had it tough.
The person herself smiled softly.

“Please don’t worry. High elves not going into the town is just an official stance. We actually patrol the town with this pendant on.”

She showed us the pendant that was hanging on her breasts erotically.
It was the magic tool used to change one’s appearance that we had seen at the souvenir shop during the day.

“This pendant is just a replica. That’s why, even if I take it off, it doesn’t change my appearance.”

Lyss tried to take the pendant off to prove that she was a High elf.

“Change…… ara, change, —!”
“Hi, hime-sama !?”

She couldn’t take it off by herself but bit her tongue instead.

“Uu……”

Ah, a drop of tear formed.
In the end, the panicked Shia took it off.
She truly is a clumsy girl……

But, it was true that even when she took off the magic tool, her long ears and green pupils stayed the same.

When she recovered from the pain, she cleared her throat with a small cough and continued.

“…….Ahem. First, before I explain why I used such a roundabout way to have you all come here, please let me tell you about my older sister, Lara Enol Meméa.”

The location of her older sister, Lara Enol Meméa, was lost due to the war in the Fairy continent about 15 years ago.
At the time, Enol had entered, albeit in name only, as an ally to the biggest human country, Meltia. At the night of arrival, somehow only Lara disappeared.

“Was she kidnapped ?”

Lyss shook her head at my question.

“With my older sister’s power, it’s impossible to get kidnapped or assassinated.”
“Power? Was she a magician?”
“My older sister was an excellent magician…… but when a High elf gets older than 100 years old, they get a spirit’s power. We call it [Spirit’s blessing]. Older sister had the same blessing as the High elf of the five races’

heroes, [Clairvoyance eyes]. This blessing's power is that you can identify things within a maximum radius of about 4000 kilometers."

In short, if anyone tried to kidnap her, she could identify the perpetrators as soon as they tried to get close.
And she could do it from a radius of 4000 km. That's got to be cheating.

"We formed a large scale search party after the war, but in the end, we couldn't find her. We don't have any traces of her at the moment. Either she willingly hid herself, or possibly ….. Also, when we tried sorting through big sister's room, we found a record book."

It was written in broken sentences.
The dates were all over the place, the smallest ones spanning single days while the longest spanned several years.
Nevertheless, everything written in the record book happened as dated.
What's more, future events written in the book happened one after the other.

"This convinced me. Besides [Clairvoyance], big sister possesses [Prophetic Dream]. Each one is a rare blessing that is only granted to one person in history. Big sister possesses two of those at the same time."
"Is possessing two at the same time possible?"

To my inquiry, she clearly declared.

"Never in all of history. So, I think that's why big sister was hiding her second power. Looking back, there were times when big sister seemed to have a sharp intuition, but I never thought that she had a second power…. Even though I was always near her as her little sister, I never noticed at all.
The last thing written in the record book big sister left is — that in about three months from now, the High elf kingdom Enol will be destroyed in a single night."

This country is going to be destroyed?
I recalled the country's situation that I had seen while walking around today.

(— *You can't destroy a country of this scale in a single night.*)

I got the chills just thinking about it.

“The cause of destruction was also written. It says that the barrier stone in High elf kingdom Enol will be destroyed by someone.”
“Barrier stone ?”
“As everyone knows, the demon king in the Fairy continent was defeated and sealed by the five races’ heroes. One of the barriers that maintains the seal is in Enol and it’s called the barrier stone. Other continents are the same, but how many, or where they are, even we royal family don’t know. The five races’ heroes hid everything. The founder of the royal family of the High Elf clan created the country here in order to protect one of the barrier stone”

Lyss remembered the details written in the record book, and tightly grasped the hands which were on her knees.

“The barrier stone will be destroyed, then from under the stone, [basilisk], [dragoon]…… monsters will come rushing out, turning people into stone, dyeing the lake with the red of blood, and this country will be destroyed in one night — is what big sister wrote.”
“If that prediction is true, wouldn’t it be better to discuss it with the king and prepare the military?”

But Lyss shook her head with a sad face.

“The king — father doesn’t believe in big sister’s record book.”
“And why is that again ?”
“Because the stone couldn’t be destroyed even by the demon king, or the five races’ heroes, or modern S rank magicians, for example. To prevent the demon king from reviving, when the barrier stone was created by the five races’ heroes, they declared, as written in old records: [Even we, ourselves, can’t destroy].”

Lyss voice turned dark.

“Moreover, big sister being the first in history to have two rare spirit blessings was already unbelievable, so he just brush it off as big sister’s joke or lie. I tried asking mother to put in good words too, but her health is so bad that she can’t leave her room……”

She said with serious expression.

“Well, big sister indeed loved to fool around since long ago. Everyone, me for example, has had a hard time with her pranks. But, at the same time, she’s a lot more excellent than me, and she has what it takes to be king, dignity included.”

And it seems that the way to save the High elf kingdom was also written properly.
And that is us.

“The way to lead Lute-sama was also written in the record book. According to it, I would ask a certain slave merchant I know to guide my guard maid, Shia, to the Dragon continent and entrust her to the [Brutus slave market]. And, accord to what was written in the book, Lute-sama would become curious because of the word [tanakakouji], and would end up buying her.”

I see…… you played by the book and didn’t ask me directly, but did something as troublesome and absurd as [make Shia into a slave], huh. But, in actuality, after hearing the name [Tanaka Kouji], I decided to buy Shia at all cost.
As a result, I was sitting here in front of Lyss.

Lyss once again thanked Shia for guiding us here.

“I am really sorry for putting you through such troubles. But, thanks to Shia, I got to meet Lute-sama and everyone before the country is destroyed. I’m really happy.”
“No, I am hime-sama’s guard maid. This much is natural.”

Lyss turned around once again.

“According to the record book, even if we ask S class magicians for help, this country would still be destroyed. Only Lute-sama’s group can save this country. Even though I am the 2nd princess, without any power or freedom, I will still definitely give you any reward you want. I will help you in any way I can. So, please save this country. I’m begging you!”

Both Shia and Lyss bowed.

“Lute-kun, what do we do ?”
“……”

Snow and Chrisse asked for my decision from both sides.
Of course, Meiya too.

I folded my arms and thought.

(As expected I can’t leave them after hearing that story…… If the barrier stone were to be destroyed, the damage wouldn’t just end here. And I can’t ignore people looking for help. Guess I can try doing whatever I can.)

I resolved myself, then answered.

“Understood. I’ll do what I can. If you’re okay with it, I will cooperate”
“Th, thank you!”

Just like that, we decided to save the High elf kingdom Enol from its crisis.

Chapter 070 – Barrier Stone

The next day, I immediately checked out the barrier stone in the High elf's castle — Woodcastle, and its surroundings in the presence of Lyss. Of course Snow, Chrisse, Meiya, and Shia accompanied me, too.
The barrier stone looked exactly like a pyramid, tall enough that I had to look up.
Probably as tall as a five~six story building.

I looked around it but there was no entrance.
Its texture was close to marble. So smooth that you wouldn't think it's been here for thousands of years.

Its position was about 10km away from the High elf's castle — Woodcastle.
It looked out onto a garden with great view, not an obstacle in sight.
The castle itself was originally made to monitor the barrier stone, or so Lyss explained.

The barrier stone was surrounded by high ramparts.

There were fully armed soldiers stationed on top of the ramparts fully armed soldiers are stationed, elves and Black elves that served High elves, just like Shia.
There were about 50 soldiers.

Once you passed through the ramparts, you would find a lake.

As I was done with the check, I recalled the characteristic of the monsters I heard about from Lyss last night.

If the barrier stone was destroyed, only the monsters called 'basilisk' and 'dragoon' would appear from here, it seemed.

'**Basilisk**' was a monster with lizard head and body, bird wings, and dragon tail. Among researchers it was said to be a subspecies of dragon, or something close. Because of that, it had hard scales covered all over its

body. Another troublesome trait was its magic eyes.
Basilisk eyes possessed the ability to petrify.
It was different for each individual but the effective range was about 500 meters.
Once you were caught by its magic eyes, there was no way to recover from being petrified.

Whereas '**dragoon**', much less magic eyes, it doesn't even have magic, and had low intelligence. But this one also inherited dragon's blood, so its physique ccould reach up to two meters. Like dragons, it had scales cover its body, though not as hard, and it possessed superhuman strength that didn't lose to an orc or even an orge.
Its weapons were primitive weapons like stone spears, axes, or clubs made from bone but it had high strength and defense, that kind of monster.
The troublesome thing was that they attacked in groups.

If the record book was true, then after the barrier stone was destroyed, there wouldn't just be thousands of monsters flowing, but ten of thousands it seems.

With that much of war potential, the country can certainly be destroyed in a single night.

I took the factors of geography, the enemy war potential, and our force into the equation, then answered.

"If we prepare carefully, then we may be able to fight."
"Is it true, Hero-sama !?"

Somehow Lyss was calling me 'Hero-sama'.
Being called that in front of other people sure was embarrassing.

"Yes. But of course, preparation in advance is necessary."

The enemies were strong and numerous.
If just the adventurers and soldiers in the castle were to deal with it, the damage would be pretty harsh.

The first trouble was the '**basilisk**'.
It could fly, and had hard scales comparable to a dragon. It also had magic

eyes that petrified anything it saw. The effective range was about 500 meters radius wide.
But, we had Chrisse.

The max shooting range of the M700P was 900m, so she could just blow its head off from the inside by shooting [7.62x51mm explosive magic stone round] though the eye sockets before entering the magic eyes' effective range.

The dragoon also had high attack and defense, albeit low intelligence, and their numbers could reach tens of thousands.
But if I made use of the internal mechanisms of the current AK47 and changed it a bit to make a general-purpose machine gun, then it should be enough to deal with them.

General-purpose machine gun is — a machine gun.

Well then, what exactly is a machine gun ?
A machine gun is basically a full automatic rifle, and it could continuously shoot at the speed of more than 100 rounds per second, had the function to swap the barrel, and due to the powerful cartridge its range was long (about 1~2km).

It was feared as the Devil's weapon that could annihilate hundreds, or even thousands of enemies with just a few soldiers.
Hiram Maxim, the inventor of the first machine gun called it 'killing machine'.

In fact, machine gun had claimed the lives of many, enough to change the face of war at the time.

In WW1, before the machine gun was introduced, infantry corps would stand from a few hundred to 1000 meters apart and spread out into ranks and shoot each other with bolt action rifles, while assault infantry and cavalry would charge to the sound of trumpets.
But when the machine gun entered the stage, they were all easily shot down.

For example, in the Russo-Japanese war, the Russian army annihilated 200 Japanese soldiers with just Maxims (heavy machine gun)2 .

In a certain colony, 28 British troops and 20 foreign troops, for a total of 48, died, but the “casualties” from the enemy natives was over 11000 people.

It is said that about 80 percent of the casualties of the First World War (9.92 million dead, 21.2 million wounded) were victims of the machine gun.

One battalion (about 1000 people) could be swept clean with one machine gun in just three minutes. It was only natural that it came to be called the Devil’s weapon.

The machine gun then evolved and split into the heavy machine gun and the light machine gun, each serving a different purpose.

The heavy machine gun took at least three people to operate, was set up in encampments, trenches and fortifications and was used for defense.

The light machine gun could be used by one or two people and was an attack weapon, used to assault enemy trenches.

As the age advanced into the Second World War, heavy machine guns, while having the portability of light machine guns, that came attached as anti-aircraft machine guns or vehicle-mounted machine guns entered the stage. This was the general-purpose machine gun.

The general-purpose machine gun I’m making was a PKM, a machine gun based on the well-proven mechanism of the AK47.
It was a general-purpose machine gun currently used by the Russian military.

These were the specs:
Caliber: 7.62×54mmR
Total Length: 1173 mm
Barrel Length: 658 mm
Weight: 8.99 kg
Ammunition capacity: Belt link ammunition feed (200 rounds)

I’ve already made several AKs, so the internal structure and gun body shouldn’t be much of a problem.
The problem lied in the ammunition (cartridge).

Could I make the case for 7.62x54mmR cartridge, find the right amount of powder, and mass produce it three months from now?

Originally I should have made a general-purpose machine gun that used the M700P's 7.62x51mm NATO round….
Heavy machine gun or light machine gun or whatever, if I made one that used the same ammo as the infantry's standard ammunition it would be more convenient to supply.
But I didn't have the confidence to make general-purpose machine guns that used 7.62x51mm NATO rounds, for example, the M60, or the M240, in just 3 months.

Because of that, it was faster to make 7.62x54mmR cartridges with the experience I had accumulated up until now.

Or rather, soon Chrisse may ask to replace her M700P for a semi-automatic sniper rifle that uses 7.62x54mmR cartridge like the SVD (Dragunov sniper rifle).

If it's in Chrisse's hands then even the less accurate SVD probably wouldn't be a problem.

When it comes to that, I will need to have a "briefing session" with Chrisse.

But in the end, it was still a race against time.
It's probably better to make some insurance.

I omitted the parts I couldn't tell everyone about and wrapped up the explanation of the general-purpose machine gun.

Meiya's eyes sparkled while she took notes, as usual.
Snow's group listened with uninterested faces as usual, while, Lyss showed great interest.
There's no way she wouldn't be interested in a weapon that can save her country now, is there?

Then a new character appeared.

“Hee~, so you’re the Hero-sama that oneechan brought along.”
“!?”

I turned to the voice, and there was a three, no, four meters large wolf.
Its body hair was completely white, while from its mouth, sharp teeth like those of a Sabre tiger were sprouting out.

Riding on that wolf’s back was a little girl.

The soldiers guarding the barrier stone were kneeling toward her.

Her height was about the same as Chrisse’s, and her physique was also close. She had long blonde hair tied in twintails, and was a beautiful girl, but she seemed to have this cheeky air about her.

She continued talking without getting off from the wolf’s back.

“I’m Lyss oneechan’s little sister, Luna. This one is a sabre wolf called Lexy. My favorite thing is the hero story picture book. That’s why when I’m in a pinch, please save me like the princess in picture book ne~♪”
“Hey, Luna! Why are you giving greetings from Lexy’s back!? Get off right now and give a proper greetings! I’m sorry Hero-sama, my little sister is still a kid who isn’t even 100 years old yet, so she still doesn’t understand etiquette properly.”

No no no, she’s more than old enough.
She likes picture books — hero stories even!
Looks like she would get along with Chrisse. Their physiques are similar, their blonde hair too.

Lyss was apologizing for her sister’s impolite attitude.
The little sister Luna, even though she was scolded by her big sister, didn’t seem to care and nimbly jumped down from the sabre wolf Lexy.

“Why did you come here in the first place?”
“Of course, to see the Hero-sama that oneechan brought along.”
“You came here just for that?”
“It’s okay isn’t it? Anyway it’s not just me you know.”

We didn't realize because the big sabre wolf was in the way, but a man with servants following him stood behind it.
Lyss was shocked by the appearance of the man.

"Fa, father !?"

Lyss' father — in other words, the king of High elf kingdom Enol !?

He was about 180cm tall, but had a slender figure with long blonde hair. While it's obvious as he is a High elf, he looked so young that you wouldn't think he already had three daughters, he looked like he was in his late 20s or early 30s.

The king slowly walked forward.
He waved his hand down and the guarding soldiers quietly left the scene.
He cleared everyone out.

He then took a glance at us and rebuked us with a calm voice.

"I'd like you to not thoughtlessly approach the barrier stone. It's a very sacred thing to us High elves."

At her father's words, Lyss steps forward and covered for us.

"Father, these guests are the heroes I have asked to come here. How can you say that?"
"Lyss, you are still believing in the nonsense that Lara left ……?"

He replied to his daughter's reprimand with disappointment.

"Please stop with such thoughtless words like she had not only 'Clairvoyance' but also 'Prophetic dreamer'. That was just her messing around. Even the demon king can't destroy the barrier stone. So Enol being ruined in one night is impossible. Please stop reminding me of Lara."

The king believed in the absolute defense of the barrier stone that had been continuously protected by the High elves' ancestors, but at the same time he, as the parent, did not want to be reminded of the eldest daughter, Lara's disappearance.

However, Lyss didn't think it was her sister's mischief.
She had successfully brought us to this country by following the record book.
So of course, she objected.

"But Hero-sama came to us because I followed what the record book says!"
"It's just a coincidence. To begin with, I don't think they have the power to stop them if the barrier stone broke and monsters came pouring out of it."
"That's too rude, even for Father!"
"But it's the truth, they're still children. How can I believe that they can save us from a never before seen crisis. If they do have that kind of strength, I'd like them to show me."

The conversation was going in a weird direction.
Under the circumstances, he had to investigate us.

"……. you mean to say?"
"If they have that kind of power, then I want them to defeat the Giant scorpion that lives in the forest nearby."

The Giant scorpion was a 7-8 meters large scorpion monster, and it had a hard outer shell that made blades completely useless. It had three tails from where it launched countless stingers, a rather annoying monster.
If it were a request from the Adventurers' Guild, it would've been a level V quest.

"…… tsk."

Lyss gritted her teeth, unable to answer right away.
She believed in her sister, but the Giant scorpion was an extremely dangerous monster. To add to that, she had never seen our strength herself so she couldn't reply.

The King said that because he understood.
If I refused, he would use that as a reason to kick me out.
If I accepted and could really defeat the Giant scorpion, then all's well that ends well.

Either way, he stood to benefit from it.

As expected from the King of a country. …. but I don't like it.

I answered in Lyss' place.

"…… I understand. I'll bring down the Giant scorpion."

Lyss stared wide eyed at me when I gave my consent.
I continued the negotiations.

"In return, when I've safely defeated the Giant scorpion, I'd like you to listen to what Lyss-sama has to say. And if, for example, the problem doesn't occur as predicted in the record book, then all the better."
"Hero-sama…."

Lyss heard my request and gripped both of her hands tightly to her chest.
The King silently looked at me for a while, judging my expression.

"……. All right. You have my word. I'll listen to what Lyss has to say a bit if you defeat the Giant scorpion."
"Thank you very much."

I gave him a salute I learned in the Vlad house — right hand on my chest, left hand behind my back, and bowed.

The King saw my salute then turned his back, and returned to the castle.

And we hurriedly went on our way to defeat the Giant scorpion.

Chapter 071 – Preparation for Departure

A guest room as wide as two tennis courts.
Flowers were arranged in expensive looking vases, paintings and sets of armor decorate the wall. Rugs that are fluffy to the point of burying your ankle covered all over the floor and the sofa too looked so soft that it could swallow half of your body once you sit on it.

We changed our location from the barrier stone to a guest room inside the High elves' castle, Woodcastle.
I once again bowed my head to everyone.

"I'm sorry for one-sidedly deciding to go defeat the Giant scorpion."
"U~un, if Lute-kun didn't say anything I was going to raise my hand."
[I'm the same as Snow-oneechan.]
"That's right! With Lute-sama's power, the likes of a Giant scorpion will get easily massacred some way or the other!"

For some reason Meiya made an unfounded statement.
Well, I agreed because we had a chance to win, like she said.

"Then please allow me to come with you."

Lyss who's been listening to the discussion suggested that she participate in this subjugation.
I stopped her hurriedly.

"I'm happy you feel that way, but it's too dangerous for the princess of a country to go subjugating monsters."
"T… that's right hime-sama. Please don't be rash."

Shia who serves her also backed me up hurriedly.

"I have of course taken the danger into account. However, it was I who had found the record book, followed what is written inside and took you heroes

here as the ones who will save my motherland. I have a duty to see things through to the end. No matter what happens…"

But Lyss' determination was firm.
Then again I could also understand her feelings.

"……. I understand. But please inform the king and properly get permission to come with us. We'll be troubled if anything happens later."
"Thank you very much!"

Lyss said her thanks with a smile.

"In that case, as hime-sama's guard maid I'll protect you with all of my body and soul!"
"Thank you too, Shia."
"Here here here! If Oneechan goes then Luna will go too!"

The younger sister Luna who'd been listening silently up until now raised her hand cheerfully.
The elder sister Lyss raised her beautiful eyebrows in anger.

"This is not a trip we're going on. We can't take you along!"
"Oneechan is not the one who gets to decide! Hey Lute, take Luna with you too. O・ne・ga・i☆"
"I can't."

Luna pleaded with upturned eyes and a forced voice but was concisely rejected.
She took offense at my refusal.

"Why is it that oneechan can go but Luna can't? Luna wants to go on a journey! Luna wants to go on an adventure like in the picture books!"

Just like the little girl she looks to be, she screamed selfishly.
Of course, Lyss roared at her.

"How many times do I have to tell you! We are not going on a trip!"
"Pweeeh! Oneechan is mean! Fine! Then Luna will think of something herself!"

She left the room leaving an ominous remark behind.
Lyss once again turned around to face us and bowed ashamedly.

“I’m truly sorry. Luna is the youngest of us sisters and she had been pampered a little too much while growing up.”
“No, we don’t mind so Lyss-sama shouldn’t either. Well then, we’ll depart depending on when Lyss-sama receives the permission.”
“Very well. I will go see father right away. I shall also prepare the wagons and secure the road permits as well.”

We then prepared the miscellaneous things we needed for the departure — information on the Giant scorpion, the geography of the terrain, distance of the round trip / one way and the necessary food and goods — and crammed them all in one place.

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It took Lyss 3 days to get permission from the king.
Because Shia is a guard, in dangerous situation she must save Lyss even if she has to throw us away — that was the condition according to the king.

At first Lyss protested vehemently at the condition, but we coaxed her into reluctantly agreeing somehow. I also think the conditional was a bit harsh, but before being the king, he was just another parent. In fact, that was the natural reaction.

We weren’t just lazing around during those three days either.
I began work on the PKM — general purpose machine gun in the lakeside residence Lyss gave us.

I asked Lyss to introduce me to people that sell magic liquid metal and magic stones, and bought up all they had.
The amount of money involved was of course so astronomical I can’t let a single person, even though she’s the princess of a country, bear it all.
Luckily we had the money from the Twin Magicians, Twin Dragon exterminations and Meiya so we weren’t short on funds. After we defeated

the enemy we can just bill the king, and if the enemy doesn't appear we can use them for other things.

The main body was made by Meiya as she received my instructions, while at the same time I started on the cartridges.
I planned on entrusting Meiya with the gun body and ammunition while we fight the Giant scorpion.

The day after the king gave his permission.
Before the sun had risen, Lyss came along to the lakeside residence.
She joined us for the departure to the Giant scorpion.

The reason she came so early in the morning was to prevent the citizens causing an uproar.
If they knew that a real High elf was here, they'd form a huge crowd instantly.

Shia and I met Lyss at the front entrance.
Snow and Chrisse were in the kitchen, making today's breakfast and lunch.
Meiya was at the back, preparing the covered wagon and hooking up the horned horses and the like.

When the coachman went down from his seat and opened the coach door, Lyss came out.

"Good morning, hero-sama, Shia."
"Good morning Lyss-sama. We've been expecting … you?"

Right hand to my chest, left hand behind my back, and bow — this is the normal etiquette. I then raised my head and finally noticed her outfit.

Lyss was for some reason wearing a female full-body armor.
It was basically full silver, covering the body, hips, shoulders, arms, and legs. It had a mini-skirt in order to give the legs freedom of movement, and there was no helmet on the head, but instead an expensive-looking tiara shaped magic tool. Furthermore there was on her waist a finely crafted rapier in its scabbard.

In other words, even though we weren't going to fight the Giant scorpion right away, she was wearing a uselessly conspicuous set of armor, which

was giving me a headache.
Next to me, Shia reacted the same way, frowning as she endured the pain.

These few days Shia had the task of buying the necessary goods. If she had come here with Lyss on this day, Lyss surely wouldn't have come in this getup.
Actually, why didn't anyone in the castle point it out to her?

Noticing our questioning gazes Lyss tilted her head in doubt.

"Is anything the matter?"
"No, um, I was wondering why you came wearing armor …"
"I came here in full equipment so that I wouldn't be a burden to you, is there something strange?"

I'm glad you feel that way, but we're not fighting right away.
Was she planning to wear that for the whole 7 days we're going to be on the move …?

"First let's get you changed into normal clothes… which you didn't bring any, of course. Your body is bigger than Chrisse's so let's get you in one of Snow's extra field clothes. I'll go get permission from Snow. Shia, you go on ahead to the room."
"I'm sorry for the trouble."
"Um, Shia, what is going on?"

Lyss wasn't able to understand and was taken by Shia to Snow's room.
I went to the kitchen to borrow Snow's field clothes and to ask her for some extras for Lyss' use.
I left the armor she was wearing in one of the rooms in the house.

Once Lyss changed into field clothes, I went with her to the backyard.
A covered wagon had already been prepared there, and next to it there was a huge pile of things we will be needing for the trip.

Large barrels, armor sets × number of people, cartridges. Food, change of clothes, blankets, utensils, saddles, reins, a tall rectangular box, and so on — the amount clearly went over what the wagon can carry.

I once again asked Lyss.

“Are you sure you can really store all these?”
“Yes, please leave it to me. This much will not be a problem, I will store them in my [Infinite Storage]”

[Infinite Storage] — That is the spirit’s blessing granted to Lyss.
I recalled the detailed planning we did back at Woodcastle.

Lyss’ spirit’s blessing is one that can transport objects to a different dimension by the power of the spirits.
She can take out the stored objects anytime she wants, and no matter what is stored she won’t feel any weight. However, she seems to be unable to store living things.
Just like her sister’s, this ability of hers is an absurdly rare one.

Her sister’s blessing is a ‘lottery win’ kind of rare ability.
However, Lyss’ blessing is rare in a completely different sense.

It seems that there was only one High elf that was blessed with it in the past and was made fun of by their kind for their entire life for only being able to put objects in and bring them out.

The person herself was conscious of that, too, to the point of blurting out ‘It’s okay, I’m different from my big sister. Compared to my big sister who has the qualities to be king, I only have a divine blessing that can only put luggage in and out. And my little sister Luna, a genius who can do anything flawlessly. I’m just an average person stuck between two excellent sisters. I even got called disaster princess for my poor quality’ in the middle of the meeting.
TL note: the right term here should be “woman so glamorous as to bring ruin to a country (castle) as its king (lord) is captivated by her beauty”, like Diao Chan, but I’m guessing she doesn’t destroy her country with beauty, but with her clumsiness, her boobs is also kill, I guess, lol – yuushing
By the way I thought that the teary eyed sulking Lyss was somewhat cute, but obviously I couldn’t tell anyone that.

She immediately touched her hand on the barrel with magic liquid metal and focused her consciousness.
The barrel disappeared like a magic trick.

The person herself wasn't happy with the blessing, but since she's travelling alongside with us, it's an appreciated power.
Lyss just kept storing the luggage away, but she stopped her hands at the box of food.

"What's wrong ?"
"No, it's just, I can't quite store this away. I think there are mouse or some small animals inside"

Her blessing doesn't work with living things.
I opened the wooden box's lid to remove whatever inside.

Inside the box there indeed was a mice—the third princess Luna Enol Meméa hiding inside.

"Lu… Luna!? What are you doing here!?"
"Tsk, I failed. I forgot to take big sister's blessing into account."
"Forgot… my foot! How did you sneak out of that room ? So as to not let you follow us, I locked the room and windows, told everyone to keep watch, and yet!"

"Lyss-oneechan is naive as usual. You seriously think only that much can stop Luna-chan ? That was even easier than opening a safe without a lock. If you really wanted to stop Luna you need to put magic prevention collar on Luna, bind her arms and legs with chains, after that put her in an iron box and have at least 10 soldiers monitoring"

What is she ?
Hikita ◯kou or something ?
"Anyway, hey, oneechan, what's with that get up ? Luna also wants to try on!"
"Geez Luna! Whether we can save our country or not depends on this monster extermination you know ? If you don't quit it oneechan will seriously get angry."

Lyss who is also a B rank magician, used body enhancing technique to assist her physical ability and catch Luna by the neck like a kitty.
Seeing her angry sister with a serious expression, she behaved.

“But but, Luna also wanted to go on a journey together.”
“…Haaa, if we settle the incident this time safely, I will ask father and let us travel somewhere far away. That’s why this time please wait at the castle obediently, okay ?”
“Haaa~i”

Luna looked a little unsatisfied, but she knew further resistance would be useless so she gave up.
She left Luna to Shia and had her went to the wagon at the front and instructed them to return to the castle.
By the way, we moved in the box Luna was hiding inside another box.

Lyss then apologized many times.

“I really am sorry! My sister had caused trouble!”
“No it’s okay. There wasn’t any harm done anyway.”

I calmed the apologizing Lyss down.
Shia returned just in time when Snow, Chrisse, Meiya showed up.

“Well then Meiya, after this I’ll leave it to you.”
“Leave it to me! Please leave it to Lute-sama’s first disciple, right hand, and trusted confidant, Meiya Dragoon!”

Her titles increased again.

Like this, while it was still dark out, we boarded the wagons and set off toward the forest where the giant scorpion lives.

Chapter 072 – Portable Wash Toilet

We are going to the forest called Green Howden where the giant scorpions, the enemy we have to defeat, lives.
A one way trip from High elf kingdom, Enol to Green Howden would take about 7 days.

Early morning on the first day, after we departed from Enol.

“Uuurgh~”

Lyss got carsick and became all groggy.

Normally if she had to travel, she would do so in high class carriage with cushions, and on paved roads. So this is the first time she had travelled long distance on dirt roads like this. She sat hugging her knees like in gym class, blue faced and had a handkerchief against her mouth.
By the way due to her sitting while hugging her legs, when the wagon swayed, her voluptuous chest gets squashed softly by her legs, causing them to change shape. A truly marvelous sight.

Snow and Chrisse, who were already used to it, played with the reversi I bought in Enol. Shia was on the coachman seat, and I was on lookout duty at the back.

“Lyss-sama, are you okay ?”
“Ye, yes, I’m fine, Shia, uuurgh…”

Shia was worried so she voiced her concern from the coachman seat.
Lyss replied that she’s okay, but clearly her face’s color is saying otherwise.
I’m also worrying about her so I gave some advice.

“Lyss-sama, if it is that unpleasant, I heard that looking far away can help relieving the symptom a bit.”
“Is it true ? Then I will believe hero-sama’s words……”

It's just folk remedy, but it was better than doing nothing.
After that, Shia cheered her up in a weird way like 'nobody has died because of car sickness anyways.'
For now, the first day ended without us getting attacked by monsters, so we reached the camping ground as planned.

We started preparing camp before the sun goes down.
I asked Lyss to take out the necessary things.
She held her hand out and called out their names, they then appeared.

Snow was preparing food.
Chrisse was taking care of the horses.
Shia was setting up a barrier surrounding this area.
Inevitably, the duty of gathering firewood fell on me and Lyss.

"Well then, let's go gather firewood together"
"Firewood gathering, is it? Please leave it to me!"

Just in case, I took an AK-47 and hung it on my shoulder, then called out to Lyss.
But somehow she is strangely motivated, and pulled out the rapier which was hanging on her hips.

"Er… Lyss-sama, what exactly are planning to do ?"
"What, aren't we going to gather firewood ? Ah, it's all right. This rapier isn't of normal metal, it's made from the rare metal, orichalcum, that's why it absolutely won't break. Furthermore it's extraordinarily magic conductive, so I can easily pierce and break a tree trunk at this level."

(There is something like orichalcum !?)

Without minding the me who was shocked by the existence of orichalcum, with a joyful expression, Lyss was about to chop down a tree the size of a grown man.
I <u>hugged my head</u> at her ignorance of the ways of the world.
What kind of airhead is she!?

“No, living trees have water in it so you can’t use it as firewood. So you don’t have to cut it down”
“Is, is that so ? I’m sorry, I’m such a baka……”

Lyss realized her ignorance and put away the rapier with a beet red face.
Good thing it ended without her cutting down an innocent tree.

“Well then let’s gather withered branches that had fallen around this area, shall we ?”
“Ye, yes. I’ve troubled you”

Lyss dropped her shoulders a bit and starts collecting the withered branches like me.

Then came dinner.
The sun has gone down. We put a table and chairs next to the bonfire and made a roof with cloth. On the table there are stew and bread, simple side dishes, and a lamp shining with magic.
These furnitures and the like were all brought by Lyss.
During the level up quest last time, we camped for many days, but we didn’t bring many tools like this.
It was almost like a camp I sometimes saw on the TV in the previous world.

While we are drinking scented tea after the meal, I noticed the unusual sight of Lyss, who is sitting upright.
She held her abdomen, squirming and rubbing her thighs together.

“?”

As I tilted my head and wonder, Lyss softly whispered to Shia’s ear.
Shia whispered back.

“D, do it outside !?”

That attracted even Snow and Chrisse’ attention, Lyss’ face got dyed beet red and she looked downward.
I asked in place of everyone.

“What’s wrong ?”
“N, no, it’s just, er……”

Lyss is hesitating to say something…… ding, I got a revelation.

“Lyss-sama, I have something I want to take out.”
“Ye, yes. What should I take out ?”
“It’s the tall rectangle box. Please place it a little away from the camp, around here.”
“Here, right ? I got it.”

I stood up from the table, and asked her to place the rectangle box next to the carriage.
Lyss took the box out from the other dimension and placed it as she was told.

“Errr… what exactly is this……”

Lyss who took it out got curious and asked.
I, who was waiting for this question, puffed up my chest and answered.

“This, is the Portable Wash Toilet !”

The portable wash toilet in the previous world was just a metal water flask with nozzle attached. But the one I developed is closer to the simple toilet on construction site or event .
Four sides are covered with metal sheets made from magic liquid metal, a spare wash toilet was installed. On the floor there’s a tank to collect the filth, when it was full there’s a mechanism to throw the content outside. There was a lamp that ran on magic installed on the ceiling so that it could be used even if it was dark.

As I thought, the toilet must be enclosed with walls all around, you must cut off from the outside world. Right, you can even say that toilet is the final solace of a modern person.

After I heard that Lyss can store anything no matter the weight, I immediately constructed one.
Because I don’t want to live a life without wash toilet again.

While puffing up my chest, I encouraged Lyss.

“Right after you enter, there’s a switch for the light on your right. There’s a board inside with instruction on how to use the toilet written on it, please operate according to that”
“Operate the toilet ?”

Lyss didn’t understand and tilted her head in puzzlement.
I told her ‘ *You will understand if you get in* ’ and overbearingly pushed her into the outdoor wash toilet.

After a while, her voice came from inside the outdoor wash toilet — ‘ *Hya!?’ ‘Unn!!!’ ‘As the 2nd princess of High elf kingdom, Enol, Lyss Enol Meméa, losing to something of this level is … nnn!* ’

A little more time passed, the outdoor wash toilet’s door opens.
After she came out of the toilet, maybe her hips have given out, she sits right down and there.

Looks like the stimuli from the wash toilet was too strong for someone sensitive like her.

“Hi, hime-sama!”

Shia ran over in a panic and lended her hand to Lyss.
Lyss’ cheeks are dyed red, her eyes are cloudy, and she mumbles.

“I, I didn’t win against the wash toilet. I can’t live without the wash toilet anymore……”

Alright ! Another wash toilet believer GET !

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